USMAPS English:

Needless Detour, or Pathway to Success?

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ABSTRACT

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For almost seventy years, the United States Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS) has been the official preparatory school for West Point, yet during that time no comprehensive study has been done regarding its impact upon its graduates; moreover, no study had been done on the impact of its English Department regarding the extent to which that department has prepared its students for the West Point English program. This research project undertook the latter topic and specifically addressed the extent to which the USMAPS English Department has prepared its students for their first core English course at West Point, EN 101. This research project used a mixed methods, case study method that relied almost equally on qualitative and quantitative data for its findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The conceptual framework for this study was twofold: that of an input, intervention, and output model, in which the input was USMAPS students, the intervention was the USMAPS English program, and the output was those students' performance in EN 101, as measured by final course grades; and a values-based framework for that intervention. The qualitative data for this study consisted of a focus group discussion, class observations, interviews, and surveys of student and faculty perceptions. A series of queries collected the quantitative data for this study; this data was centered upon EN 101 GPAs and standardized test scores. This study resulted in seven findings, and its conclusions and recommendations are grounded in five themes that focus upon data integrity, curriculum reform, assessments, school culture, and transferability of findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Although this study found

that the perceptions of faculty and students clearly were that the USMAPS English program had prepared its students well for EN 101, those perceptions, combined with this study's quantitative data, could not definitively establish the extent to which the USMAPS English program had prepared its students for EN 101. Ultimately, though, a combination of clear-cut perceptions and strongly suggestive quantitative data enabled this study to arrive at one very important, overarching conclusion: the USMAPS English program has made important contributions to its students' preparation for the USMA English program.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Chapter I

THE BEGINNING

Introduction

West Point. United States Military Academy Preparatory School. The former term is known throughout the world and conjures images of majestic buildings, great leaders, and national security; the latter term is not well known even in the Army itself and certainly does not summon the kinds of grandiose thoughts associated with the words "West Point." This juxtaposition is strange, though, given that the United States Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS) and its preparatory school predecessors have for almost a century contributed significantly to the development of the very people who make West Point part of the American lexicon. That development has largely taken place via the education that USMAPS students have received, an education that is arguably the most important of the key components—academic, military, moral, and physical—in the journey that all students take during their time at USMAPS.

On a much larger scale, it is difficult to imagine how stultifying and confining the conditions surrounding the majority of people throughout history have been, but clearly these conditions have been bad enough that millions of people have left their homes and travelled thousands of miles in perilous conditions in an attempt to seize the chance to make the most of their talents. America has been known for decades, and indeed characterizes itself, as "the land of opportunity." While our country has clearly had its challenges, some of which—such as racism and incredible disparities in wealth—have

bedeviled it and continue to do so, it has also undeniably provided unimaginable opportunity for many of the millions who journeyed here for precisely that opportunity, and education has played an essential role in that journey. Indeed, as Mike Rose states in his powerful account *Lives on the Boundary*, America has been engaged in what he calls a "grand experiment" (7) to provide not only universal education to its citizens but also to do so with a populace that is incredibly diverse; moreover, one of the guiding principles of this endeavor is that all citizens should have access to an education that is sufficient to prepare them for success after schooling, regardless of their socioeconomic status while in school. Miles Myers, in his seminal work on the history of English education in America *Changing Our Minds*, amplifies this focus on education by providing insight into both how challenging this endeavor has been but also how successful our schools have been in meeting the constantly changing priorities of that endeavor.

Education in America has taken many forms, and one of the oldest—and most prestigious—such form has been national military academies. The first such academy was established by Thomas Jefferson in 1802 at West Point and is formally titled the United States Military Academy (USMA). As with anything connected with the American military, the essence of USMA—also commonly referred to as West Point or the Academy—is captured by its mission statement. This statement has undergone revision a number of times during West Point's more than two hundred years of service to its nation, and it currently reads: "The United States Military Academy's mission is to educate, train and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army" (Homepage, USMA website).

West Point has provided the nation with more than fifty thousand leaders of character, many of whom have powerfully impacted the development of our nation. From military leaders such as Grant, Lee, Pershing, MacArthur, and Schwarzkopf; to

Presidents; to many of the engineers who explored this vast land and built much of its infrastructure; to leaders across all walks of society—doctors, lawyers, business executives, and educators, et al—West Point graduates have played an enormous role in American history. However, just as Miles Myers points out in *Changing Our Minds*, America has frequently "changed its mind" regarding what it expects of West Point graduates.

For the first almost seventy-five years of its existence, USMA was an all-male, exclusively "white" institution; the first minority to graduate from West Point was Henry Flipper, USMA class of 1877. It took another almost one hundred years for West Point to admit women to its ranks, the first class of whom entered USMA in the summer of 1976 and graduated four years later as members of the Class of 1980. For Henry Flipper and his fellow African Americans, as for the women who entered West Point in 1976, being the vanguard of change was extraordinarily challenging, but change did come to West Point, and by all accounts this hallowed institution is much the better for it.

As America has become an increasingly diverse nation—it is common knowledge that white Americans will soon become a minority within the United States—so, too, has America's Army become more diverse. Correspondingly, and due to simple human nature, as America's Army has become literally much more colorful, the leaders of that Army have needed to look more like those they lead, a process which is inextricably linked to the topic of my research project: the role of the United States Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS) and specifically its English Department in preparing a very diverse body of young men and women to take their place in the ranks of classes entering USMA and eventually in the Long Gray Line, a term used to refer to the sum total of all West Point graduates.

As is the case with West Point, USMAPS has a mission—known as its "purpose" from the perspective of its parent institution, USMA—which has also undergone several significant revisions. Currently, the purpose of USMAPS is to "prepare candidates

selected by the United States Military Academy's Admissions Office for the academic, military, and physical challenges of the United States Military Academy at West Point" (USMA website). Although USMAPS exists to prepare its students—Cadet Candidates, or CC's—for the physical, military, moral, and academic challenges of West Point, in practice the vast majority of students attending USMAPS do so because they were found to be academically deficient during the admissions process, and the focus of their USMAPS experience is accordingly structured.

The history of USMAPS is quite interesting and reflects, again, the changing demands made upon West Point across the past many decades. In 1916, in preparation for a surge in the size of the Army and officer corps because of the looming conflict in Europe, Congress increased the size of West Point to 1,336 cadets, in large part by adding a second slot to each Congressional district and "…180 slots to the War Department for equal distribution to the Regular Army and National Guard" (Betros, 64). These War Department slots enabled West Point to recruit enlisted soldiers and thereby incorporate their experience into the Corps of Cadets.

Correspondingly, Congress gave the War Dept. authority to establish a series of preparatory schools which would work to prepare their students for success at West Point. Interestingly, GEN Pershing established the first of these schools in France during World War I; at the conclusion of WWI, a series of preparatory schools was established across the United States, including Hawaii, as well as in the Philippines and the Panama Canal Zone (76). These schools worked relatively well but faced many challenges due to the lack of any centralized program of instruction or location, so in 1946 GEN Maxwell Taylor, then Superintendent of West Point, established the United States Military Academy Preparatory School at Stewart Airfield in Newburgh, New York (76). In 1957, the school moved to Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, and from there to Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey in 1975. In what may very well be its final move, USMAPS came "home" to West Point

in 2011 and is located on the grounds of the Academy, approximately three miles from the main cadet area.

Admission to West Point has almost always been quite competitive—students are essentially on a full academic scholarship currently worth more than $300,000 that covers tuition, room, board, uniforms, and extensive military training, along with receiving a salary of approximately three hundred dollars per month, followed by a guaranteed job immediately after graduation by virtue of the five-year service commitment as a commissioned officer incurred upon graduation—and USMAPS (also known as the Prep School) has played a key role in preparing its graduates for success at West Point. Initially, the Prep School focused on preparing enlisted soldiers to be cadets, but that focus expanded over the years to include civilian candidates who were fully qualified for West Point but did not receive an appointment from West Point. On a related note, those students who enter USMA directly from high school or, in far fewer cases, from another college, are referred to as Direct Admits. In 1995, another major shift occurred at USMAPS, when its purpose broadened again, this time to focus upon meeting class composition goals regarding minorities and recruited athletes (85). That shift has stayed in effect, and currently USMAPS is allowed to fill up to 40% of its incoming class with recruited athletes, many of whom are also minorities.

All students admitted to USMAPS are high school graduates, and each student initially applied to USMA and was selected by the USMA Admissions Department to instead attend USMAPS. Interestingly, in order to attend USMAPS, the candidate must be disqualified in some way—academically, physically, or militarily—and this disqualification normally occurs in the academic realm, often times due to not meeting prescribed minimum scores on the SAT or ACT: currently 560 on any portion of the SAT or 24 on any subject on the ACT (USMA Admissions). For the past few decades, USMAPS classes have begun with approximately 240 students, of whom approximately 200 have completed the program requirements and graduated. Of those students who

graduate from USMAPS, almost all are offered admission to West Point, and almost every one of those students chooses to accept these offers of admission. These USMAPS graduates comprise more than fifteen percent of entering West Point classes—approximately 200 of 1200 entering students—and many of them go on to perform exceedingly well, often comprising, for example, an outsized portion of each class's leadership.

Overview

In this chapter, I will address the following topics, in addition to the introduction that I just concluded: my background; the research problem; the purpose of my research; research questions; research assumptions; anticipated outcomes; the rationale for and significance of my research; conceptual framework; and terminology. As guidance for how to approach this dissertation, I have used what I have learned from many sources, but primary among them are James Mullooly's dissertation *Work, Play, and Consequences: What Counts in a Successful Middle School* and Linda Bloomberg and Marie Volpe's *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Road Map from Beginning to End*.

My Background

Prior to discussing the nature of the specific problem I am examining, I want to highlight a few things about my background, in order to provide insight into how that background has influenced my interest in this topic and how it may have, unbeknownst to me, perhaps prejudiced me in certain respects. I was born in 1960 and grew up without a father; my parents divorced when I was two years old, and I saw my father on only two occasions thereafter: once when he took my sister and me to dinner when I was about

nine years old, and once when my family and I visited him and his wife and their children in 1999. My mother never re-married and was a schoolteacher her entire working career; my sister and I never wanted for any necessities but grew up in a household with nothing beyond the basics. I had no military experience prior to attending West Point and went there because I was recruited for football, it offered a great education, and it cost no money to attend. Upon graduation, I ended up serving a full career—twenty-four years—in the Army as an armor officer, and I spent the second half of that career teaching philosophy and composition at West Point, after having earned my MA in philosophy at Duke University. I retired from the Army in 2006 and then worked for four years as an executive at the West Point alumni association, a job I found to be challenging and fulfilling, but I strongly missed teaching and seized the opportunity to re-enter the classroom when a teaching slot came open at USMAPS in the fall of 2010, and I was fortunate enough to be selected to fill that slot.

I was seventeen when I entered West Point and twenty-one when I graduated, and I often wish that I had asked West Point to attend USMAPS instead of entering directly from high school; I firmly believe the extra year of academic and physical growth, along with the emotional maturation that I am sure would have occurred, would have served me very well at West Point and as a young officer. I have always felt a strong connection to those who have faced some kind of disadvantage in their lives, and I have found teaching at USMAPS to be even more gratifying than I found teaching cadets to be—and I loved teaching cadets. My hope is that this research project will ultimately enable the USMAPS English program to even more effectively prepare its students for the humanities portion of the West Point curriculum, especially the freshman English composition course that almost all first-year students take. At this point in my life, I believe that teaching at USMAPS is my true calling, and I look forward to many wonderful years in the classroom and as the leader of the USMAPS Dept. of English, a role I assumed in March 2014 when I was selected as the Director of that department.

Research Problem

The basis of any worthwhile research is the existence of a meaningful problem to be solved. In my case, that problem is that even though preparatory schools and, later, USMAPS itself, have been in existence for almost a century; even though the Academy—and hence the nation—has devoted considerable resources to the mission of preparing soldiers and other groups of particular interest for admission to the Academy; and even though anecdotal and some degree of quantifiable evidence exists that these resources have produced benefits, no one has closely and comprehensively examined the efficacy of USMAPS with respect to its core mission—preparing students for success at West Point—nor, more specifically, has anyone examined the USMAPS English program in the same light. This gap in knowledge is quite surprising, particularly given the results-driven individuals who have always comprised the leadership of the Army, West Point, and USMAPS. Additionally, this knowledge gap extends to other post-secondary preparatory schools—institutions such as Choate Rosemary Hall, Marion Military Institute, and Blair Academy—because the literature examining the effectiveness of these schools is incomplete, contradictory, or nonexistent.

Moreover, this gap in knowledge is a problem worth studying because every slot that goes to a Cadet Candidate is a slot that does not go to someone termed a "Direct Admit," i.e., a student who comes to West Point directly from high school or, in a few cases, college, and these Direct Admits almost always have records measurably superior to the students admitted to USMAPS, in terms of academic achievement as measured by class rank, grades, quality of coursework, and standardized scores as well as extracurricular activities. Because admission to USMA is so competitive, and because the mission of West Point is so important, it is clearly worth closely examining the performance of Prep School graduates at USMA and in the Army and attempting to

determine the impact USMAPS had on their performance in order to assess whether this aspect of the admissions process merits the resources devoted to it.

More specifically, the problem that my research is going to examine is that the degree to which the English program at USMAPS prepares its graduates for their initial English course at West Point—EN101, the first in a four course sequence of English courses that all cadets must take and pass—is unknown. That is, while the performance of USMAPS graduates in USMA English courses is easily determinable, the role of the USMAPS English program in that performance has never been closely examined. I decided to focus only upon the relationship between the English preparation at USMAPS and EN101 because after successfully completing EN101, any link between what students learned at USMAPS and performance in English courses following EN101 would be difficult to ascertain because at that point it would be almost impossible to distinguish between the influence of knowledge learned in the USMAPS English program and that of the knowledge attained in EN101. Having said that, my research does include an examination of how USMAPS graduates have performed in the other USMA English core courses—EN 102, spring semester freshman Literature; PY 201, sophomore-level Philosophy; and EN 302, junior-level Advanced Composition—because I wanted to examine whether performance trends apparent in EN 101 manifested themselves in subsequent core English courses, but the primary focus of my research has been on the connection between the USMAPS English course and EN 101 because of the very close connection between those two courses of instruction: Prep School graduates complete their study of USMAPS English in May and then begin their study of USMA English—EN101—three months later, in the August of their freshman year.

The USMAPS curriculum is narrowly focused because the institutional belief—of USMAPS and USMA—has always been that students who can read and write well; who have mastered the mathematical skills necessary for success in a curriculum that stresses math, science, and engineering; and who have developed solid study skills will be well

prepared for USMA. Thus, the USMAPS curriculum has for some time focused on only three areas: English, math, and a formalized study skills class. Just this past year, though, a Science course became part of that curriculum, but that addition will almost certainly be the last one because the curriculum is now quite full with respect to students' available time and energy. However, and despite the addition of a fourth subject to the curriculum, to this point no in-depth research has been conducted on what link may exist between how well Prep School graduates are prepared via their USMAPS curriculum and how well they perform in the USMA curriculum, and I am going to examine the extent of that connection with respect to the USMAPS and USMA English curricula.

Purpose

Almost all research projects that lead to dissertations are quite complex, so it is often helpful to provide the essence of such projects in one sentence, often called the purpose statement. The purpose statement for my project follows: I am studying the USMAPS English curriculum and the performance of USMAPS graduates—and perceptions of that performance—in their core English courses at West Point, but especially EN 101, in an attempt to determine the extent to which that curriculum prepares Cadet Candidates for success in the English program at West Point and in order to develop curricular reforms in the USMAPS English program that will better prepare USMAPS students for success in their core English classes at USMA and perhaps offer valuable insights to other post-secondary college preparatory institutions.

Almost five years ago, I began my doctoral studies with the idea of conducting a research project with the purpose I detail above. At that time, and based on the sound advice of two of my professors, I focused my research on the perceptions of USMAPS graduates regarding how well the English curriculum at USMAPS had prepared them for their core English classes at West Point, USMA English instructors regarding how

Prepsters had performed in their classes, and myself concerning what I had observed over the course of a series of classroom observations. As a result of that focus, I wrote two fairly lengthy papers—more than twenty pages each—that focused on interviews, observations, and focus group discussions. These papers and the aforementioned assessment vehicles taught me a great deal about perceptions, my subjects' as well as my own, and ended up serving a key role in my project.

However, I later found that focusing only on the previously discussed perceptions to be less than optimal because what I ultimately wanted to do with my dissertation was rely not only on perceptions as the basis for my findings, conclusions, and recommendations but also on quantitative data regarding USMAPS graduates' and Direct Admits' relative preparation for and subsequent performance in USMA core English courses, in order to establish a much broader base for my study. Fortunately, I knew that I would have access to reams of data regarding the preparation for and performance of these two groups in USMA core English courses and would therefore be able to meaningfully compare these two groups' performance as a way to examine the effect of the USMAPS English program on its graduates. These data included everything from high school grades and class rank to standardized test scores to individual grades in USMA English classes, information that made the aforementioned comparison possible because it included not only performance in USMA English core courses but also the relative "starting points" of the two groups in terms of preparation for these courses. Thus, I expanded my study to include these data so that I could offer findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the perceptions of USMAPS students, their USMA English instructors, and myself as well as the quantified respective starting points of Prepsters and Direct Admits and their subsequent performance in core USMA English courses. Thus, my research project became one that used a mixed methods approach, an approach that uses qualitative and quantitative data and that I will address in detail in my methodology chapter.

In terms of research in general and qualitative research in particular, I fully realize the dangers inherent in arriving at conclusions that are not "verifiable" or "trustworthy"—the fear of which is the driving force behind the recommendation of many qualitative researchers to rely only on perceptions so that the scope of the research is within the bounds of those perceptions—but I often times wonder if qualitative researchers sometimes unnecessarily limit the scope of their research in a vain attempt to satisfy the "positivists" of the world. Indeed, this epistemological question has been debated by philosophers across the ages, and perhaps the only thing we humans can know with certainty is contained in Descartes' famous dictum "I think; therefore, I am." Of course, later philosophers such as Hilary Putnam have addressed—by virtue of thought experiments such as the "brain in a vat" discussion—whether humans could be sure of even this claim, so perhaps we must be careful of too much skepticism of our conclusions, lest we be afraid to draw any. I believe that a research project based on perceptions as well as a wealth of relevant quantitative data—i.e., a project based on a mixed methods approach such as the one I ultimately chose—can offer verifiable and trustworthy findings, conclusions, and recommendations, and I hope to demonstrate that my research project has done just that.

Ultimately, the focus of my study was to use two primary units of meaning (Vinz)—the USMAPS English program and performance in the USMA English program—to uncover the many layers of meaning inherent in attempting to determine the extent to which the former program has prepared USMAPS students for the latter program. As is the case with the beautiful nautilus shell, these layers of meaning form a continuous, spiraling series of meanings, and as is also the case with the nautilus shell, one cannot appreciate its full complexity until one slices it in half in order to look closely at its many chambers (Vinz). Fundamentally, the purpose of my research is to do just that: slice open the USMAPS English program and its relationship to the USMA English

program in order to attempt to determine the degree to which the former is preparing its students for the latter.

Research Questions

The research questions I formulated to provide the framework for my research project are the touchstones that guided my research. As Joseph Maxwell declares in his foundational text *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, "Your research questions—what you specifically want to understand by doing your study—are at the heart of your research design" (65). Moreover, because my research project focuses on perceptions as well as quantitative data, my research questions address both of these major aspects of my project.

- Research Question (RQ) One: How do USMA Department of English and Philosophy (DEP) faculty, Direct Admits, and former USMAPS students perceive others' or their own preparation for EN 101 as measured through a focus group discussion, classroom observations, interviews, and surveys?
- Research Question Two: How do USMAPS graduates perform in EN 101—and the three other core English courses—compared to their Direct Admit counterparts when the two groups are compared on the basis of final course grades?
- Research Question Three: How do the perceptions from Research Question One compare with the performance data from Research Question Two?
- Research Question Four: To what extent can any of the results stemming from Research Questions One through Three be determined to arise from students' experience in the USMAPS English program?

There are clearly many variables about the relationship between knowledge learned in the USMAPS English course and performance in EN101 and the other USMA English

core courses that a researcher must explore in order to offer plausible findings, conclusions, and recommendations concerning the impact on student learning of the USMAPS English program. This daunting number of possible relationships is precisely what contributes so heavily to making program assessments in general and this assessment in particular so difficult to perform because of the inherent difficulties in isolating any variable—in this case, the impact of the USMAPS English program on its graduates' performance in EN 101—and determining its impact on outcomes. However, the research questions above, by addressing the relevant perceptions of students, instructors, and researcher and by examining in detail a wealth of quantitative information that is clearly applicable to this research project, have enabled me to offer what I believe are trustworthy findings, plausible conclusions, and actionable recommendations, the specifics of which I address in the relevant chapters of this dissertation.

Research Assumptions

At this point, I turn to the three primary assumptions that guided my research and upon which that research was based. My most fundamental assumption dealt with the epistemological perspective I hold regarding not only this research project but also the world in general. In the epistemology portion of my philosophy studies, I learned about and was intrigued by everything ranging from the British empiricists such as Locke to the rationalists such as Descartes to the philosopher who attempted to meld these two very different worldviews, Immanuel Kant. Ultimately, though, I found the pragmatism of thinkers such as C.S. Peirce and William James to offer the most valuable way for me to view the extent to which humans can know their world because this viewpoint rests upon the admittedly simplified but nonetheless accurately stated foundational belief that the "best" way to think about knowledge, research methods, etc. is to simply do what works,

as defined by the context of the situation in question. Pragmatists such as Peirce and James are deeply embedded in and knowledgeable of rigorous philosophy—Peirce, for example, was very Kantian in much of his thought—but they ultimately decided that the extensive conversations and arguments about existence and knowledge that characterize much of philosophy are fruitless and that humanity must move beyond these discussions to a worldview grounded in what enables people to make meaning of their experiences. I kept this worldview very much in mind as I was doing my research, and doing so greatly aided me in moving past what could have been paralyzing fears regarding the efficacy and applicability of my project.

On a more practical level, my second key assumption was that there exists a wealth of useful information about the problem and questions that drive my research and that I would be able to access that information. I spoke with my USMAPS English Director predecessor about what kinds of records he had about the kind of data in which I was interested, and he told me that he had reams of it, much of I which I accessed during my research; he had been here at USMAPS for thirty-one years when I spoke to him about this matter, so I am fortunate indeed that he kept these kinds of records. Additionally, I am fortunate because I have been working at West Point for more than twenty years and have established a number of strong relationships with individuals in various Departments and organizations. These people told me that they would be happy to help me access and process the data I needed, and they have been true to their word. Their efforts have played an enormous role in enabling me to conduct the kind of study I have performed, and I will be eternally grateful to them for their assistance.

My final assumption was that I would be able to analyze the data I collected—whether qualitative in the form of interviews, surveys, observations, and focus groups or quantitative in the form of statistical information regarding student preparation for and performance in USMA English core courses—in a way that would allow me to arrive at

supportable findings, reasonable conclusions, and actionable recommendations. I believe that subsequent chapters in this dissertation will demonstrate that I have done just that.

Anticipated Outcomes

Regarding my anticipated outcomes, I hoped to learn a great deal about the relationship between the Prep School English program and its impact on how Cadet Candidates perform in EN101 and their other USMA English core courses. Stemming from that knowledge would then arise a number of strong conclusions and, most importantly, actionable recommendations regarding how this program might better serve its students, with respect to preparing them for EN101 and, of course, their other USMA core English courses and indeed all of their courses at USMA involving reading and writing. Finally, I hoped to be able to extend my conclusions and recommendations beyond USMA to many of the institutions doing yeoman's work in preparing under-served communities for academic work at the undergraduate level. Based on the results of my research, I believe that I have arrived at all of these outcomes, as my chapters on findings, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations demonstrate.

Rationale

Based on the outcomes of my research, the rationale I had for my project at the beginning of my research appears in retrospect to have been warranted: investigate an important problem—the devotion of significant resources to preparing an under-served community of young men and women for admission to a Tier I university in the hopes that these resources would elicit a positive outcome for those young adults in the form of success in the core English courses at that university—and determine whether the resources spent on that problem have had a positive impact. From the perspective of the

viewpoint through the very wide aperture of my entire research project, the significance of this project will fully manifest itself only once the reader has come to the final page of this dissertation, but I believe that the reader will conclude that this research does have significance, especially in the area of shedding light upon the feasibility of preparing under-served populations for educational achievement many may feel is beyond the grasp of that population. However, before moving to the final section of this introduction, I want to more fully convey the particulars of the rationale and significance of my research.

The essence of the rationale and significance of my study lies in the following two considerations: doing what is possible to help students—especially students who grew up without many of the advantages so many Americans take for granted—maximize their potential; and determining the extent to which the English program for which I am now ultimately responsible, the USMAPS English program, has impacted those who have been part of that program. As I stated earlier in this chapter, I have always felt a close connection with those who have had to overcome significant obstacles, and I have believed for many years that USMAPS has always been a wonderful part of the admissions process to West Point because of the opportunities it affords students with great potential but with shortfalls that need improvement before that potential can be realized. Moreover, because many of those shortfalls have been academic in nature and because the English program has always been one of the two fundamental courses of instruction that USMAPS has used to address those concerns—math has been the other such course of instruction—I wanted to undertake this research project to attempt to determine just how well the English program has played its role in preparing students for USMA, especially for the USMA English courses all cadets must take.

Specifically, I wanted to do something which is difficult to do, especially in qualitative or even mixed method studies: isolate the key variable and determine the extent of its impact. In my case, that key variable is the impact of the USMAPS English

program on its students' performance in EN 101, and what I tried to do is focus my thought upon the counterfactual with respect to this program; that is, I focused on attempting to learn what this program truly added to the experience of the students who underwent it, in the sense of considering how these students would have performed without having attended this program. That kind of task is obviously challenging, but having that goal as part of the rationale for and significance of my research kept me constantly focused on the main point of my research, which was to determine the value-added by the USMAPS English program. If I found evidence that students undergoing this experience were clearly better off than similar students who did not undergo it, that finding would have obvious implications regarding my project. If, however, I found that there was no discernible difference in their performance in core English courses between students of similar background, with the exception that one group of such students had experienced the USMAPS English program but the other group had not, that finding would have very different implications for my research.

With that goal in mind, my rationale for this research project focused upon three primary areas of research: the nature of the English programs at USMAPS and USMA, the perceptions of the key members of my study—USMA English faculty and USMAPS graduates who have taken USMA core English courses—and the statistical data associated with the performance of USMAPS graduates in core USMA English courses. By focusing my study on these three main points, I felt that I would be able to arrive at plausible findings and then conclusions regarding my overarching question and then be able to develop actionable recommendations stemming from those conclusions. After having completed my research project, I believe that I have accomplished these primary objectives, and I look forward to articulating them in upcoming chapters.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework underpins the entire research project and enables the researcher to articulate how she or he foresees that project unfolding. My understanding of a conceptual framework stems largely from Bloomberg and Volpe's *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Road Map from Beginning to End*. In this text, the authors describe a conceptual framework as involving the researcher's "hunches" and "stance" about the topic being studied and the author's conceptualization of how that topic might best be researched (91). Ultimately, the conceptual framework for my research project was based on two perspectives, each of which may be considered part of the framework for my study: an "input, intervention, output" model and my continual referencing of the professional and institutional values that undergird the Army, West Point, and USMAPS. These two perspectives guided every aspect of my research and served as the framework for my study and as such were one of the most important elements of that research.

With respect to the "input, intervention, output" model, the input is the students who come to USMAPS for an intensive, year-long program the purpose of which is to prepare them militarily, physically, and, most importantly, academically for the rigors of West Point. The intervention is the USMAPS program itself, and in the case of my research, the English program. I will delve into the details of that program in Chapter Two, "The Context," of this dissertation, but suffice it to say at this point that this intervention involves daily English classes focused upon critical reading and argumentative writing in a challenging but supportive environment. The output of my conceptual framework is each Cadet Candidate who walks across the USMAPS graduation stage and, ultimately, how each of those students performs a few months later when he or she commences study in the USMA English program, particularly the fall composition course, EN 101.

Regarding the professional and institutional values component of my conceptual framework, those values—which I explore in depth in Chapter Two, "Context," and

which are contained in the acronym LDRSHIP (loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage—were the lens through which I approached, conducted, and analyzed every aspect of this research project. Those values are ones that all Soldiers, whatever their background—ethnic, racial, geographic, gender, rural, urban, among others—must ultimately live by during the time they are Soldiers, and successful Soldiers—including West Point Cadets and USMAPS Cadet Candidates—are invariably those individuals who have clearly embodied these values. Thus, because of how these values influence and frame the lives of all Soldiers and because of how important they are to USMAPS Cadet Candidates, they comprised one of the two key perspectives of my conceptual framework.

Terminology

To close this initial chapter of my dissertation, I will address—and in some instances, review—the key terminology that already has appeared or that will appear in subsequent chapters. The military, for a variety of reasons, has its own lexicon, and these frequently used words contain many acronyms. What follows is a list of those words and acronyms, with a brief explanation of their significance. The term United States Military Academy (USMA) refers to the institution of higher learning—in this case, one that has a dual identity: that of university and military academy—that is situated on a piece of terrain known as West Point. The term West Point is also frequently used to refer to the institution itself, which in turn is sometimes shortened to the word Academy. The United States Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS) is a one year, post-secondary institution that serves to prepare its students for West Point. USMAPS, also known as the Prep School, is the official preparatory school of USMA, but there are a number of other preparatory schools such as the New Mexico Military Academy, Valley Forge Military Academy, North Georgia Military Academy, and various civilian preparatory schools

such as Rosemary Choate and Blair Academy that also serve to prepare high school graduates for admission to West Point. Each year, approximately two hundred USMAPS graduates, out of a beginning class of roughly two-hundred forty, join the entering West Point class, and these Prepsters—an unofficial but frequently used term for USMAPS graduates—comprise between 15-20% of the roughly 1200 member entering class; the number of entering students from the previously mentioned other preparatory schools usually numbers only a dozen or two. With respect to whether students are admitted directly to USMA or to USMAPS for one year of preparatory studies, two terms play key roles in that admissions decision: the College Entrance Examination and Rank (CEER) and the Whole Candidate Score (WCS), and both of these terms will be explored in detail in upcoming chapters.

The official term for students at the Prep School is Cadet Candidate (CC). When the USMAPS graduates take their place in that year's entering USMA class, they, as well as their Direct Admit counterparts—i.e., those students who enter West Point without having attended a preparatory school, a group which includes a very small number of students who attended a two or four year college or university but have not graduated from that institution—are known as New Cadets, and they must undergo a rigorous seven week summer training program officially known as Cadet Basic Training but much more commonly referred to as Beast Barracks. After successfully completing Beast Barracks, New Cadets are officially accepted into the Corps of Cadets and are known as Cadets. Freshmen are referred to as Plebes; Sophomores are called Yearlings; Juniors are called Cows; and Seniors are known as Firsties.

Overseeing all of this education is the Department of Defense (DoD) and, one level lower, the Department of the Army (DA). Finally, West Point has three general officers in charge of everything associated with the institution: a three-star Lieutenant General known as the Superintendent, and two, one-star Brigadier Generals, called the Commandant—who is responsible for the military aspect of Cadet life—and the Dean,

who runs the academic realm of the cadet experience. Regarding the other institution of higher learning that is of obvious importance in my study, Teachers College (TC) is essentially the school of education for Columbia University and has a long and storied history as one of the most influential such schools in the country. Because I am pursuing my Ph.D. in English Education, a degree awarded jointly by TC and Columbia, I will be more closely involved in the TC-Columbia relationship than my colleagues who are pursuing an Ed.D., a degree granted solely by TC, and will have as a member of my committee a faculty member from Columbia.

The preceding paragraphs address a bewildering number of terms, so, in order to hopefully add clarity to this explanation of key words, what follows is a condensed version of these terms in list form: United States Military Academy (USMA); West Point; United States Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS); Prep School; College Entrance Examination and Rank (CEER) and Whole Candidate Score (WCS); Prepsters; Cadet Candidate (CC); Beast Barracks; Plebes, Yearlings, Cows, and Firsties; Department of Defense (DoD); Department of the Army (DA); Superintendent, Commandant, and Dean; and Teachers College. These terms appear frequently throughout this dissertation, and having seen them in narrative format, with accompanying definitions and explanations, and in a list will hopefully help the reader more easily recall their meaning and use.

This introduction now comes to a close and has hopefully provided the reader with a succinct but comprehensive summary of the key components of this dissertation. Following this chapter are the context, literature review, research methodology, findings and analysis, and, finally, conclusions and recommendations chapters. This research project tackled a daunting problem but one well worth investigating, and it is my hope that the ensuing pages of this dissertation clearly illustrate the ultimate benefits of that project.

Chapter II

THE CONTEXT: USMA AND USMAPS

Overview

America has always been a country of citizen soldiers, a country with only a relatively recent history of maintaining a large, professional military comprised of career service members. Moreover, even with that professional military, an entity that came into being after the Second World War, the vast majority of Americans do not serve in the military and have very little experience with it. Indeed, it is common knowledge that the military that has defended America since the 9/11 attacks has been composed of fewer than two percent of the American populace, and that two percent has been poorer, more rural, and less well educated than Americans as a whole.

Thus, even though the United States Military Academy—"West Point"—is a world-renowned institution that has played an enormous role in America's history, many Americans know very little about this hybrid institution, this place that is at once a Tier One university and a military academy. Unsurprisingly, Americans know even less about the preparatory school for West Point, USMAPS. The purpose of this chapter is to provide crucially important context for this research project by examining USMAPS in an in-depth manner that will help the reader to make sense, to make meaning, of the upcoming chapters on the relevant literature concerning this study, its methodology, and its final two chapters: Chapter V, Findings and Analysis; and Chapter VI, Conclusions and Recommendations. This chapter is largely descriptive, in that it provides a great deal

of descriptive information about many of the aspects of life at USMA and, especially, USMAPS that underlie the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students and that are relevant to this study. This information is not analytic in nature because the analysis of this information manifests itself in the subsequent four chapters, in the form of the literature review, methodology, findings, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations of this study.

In order to provide readers with the aforementioned context, this chapter will address a myriad of topics: a brief history and significance of USMAPS' parent institution, USMA, especially the academic aspects of that institution; a somewhat longer but still relatively short history of USMAPS and its contributions to USMA; the process of being admitted to USMA and USMAPS; "a day in the life of a cadet candidate," which includes sections on Reception Day, Cadet Candidate Basic Training, and the four pillars of the USMAPS program, which will of course include a detailed discussion of the academic program in general and the English program in particular; the results of the year-long USMAPS experience; and, finally, thoughts about the importance of the move of USMAPS from Ft. Monmouth, NJ to West Point itself.

USMA

West Point was founded in 1802 by order of President Thomas Jefferson and became America's first military academy: "On 16 March 1802, Jefferson approved separate legislation creating a separate Corps of Engineers, which 'shall be stationed at West Point … and shall constitute a military academy'" (Betros 4). West Point's first graduating "class" could not have been smaller—one cadet, Joseph Gardner Swift, who graduated the same year that West Point was founded—but things have progressed considerably since that first class: with the graduation of the Class of 2015, USMA has provided the nation with more than fifty thousand leaders of character (WPAOG). As the

Introduction to this dissertation states, many of those graduates went on to become luminaries in American history, among them two Presidents, three five-star generals, eighteen astronauts, seventy-four Medal of Honor winners, seventy Rhodes Scholars—trailing only Harvard, Yale, and Princeton in this category—and three Heisman Trophy winners (WPAOG). This list clearly demonstrates that West Point has succeeded in "educating, training, and inspiring" young men and women to excel militarily, physically, morally, and academically. Additionally, West Point has moved forward, although not without significant resistance from some, with opening its doors to Americans of all genders, races, and sexual orientations and now has a vibrant, quite diverse student body consisting of more than fifteen percent females and more than twenty-five percent students of color (Admissions).

The aspect of the West Point experience most relevant to this research project—academics—has undergone enormous change during West Point's more than two hundred year history. Founded as an institution with the primary mission of providing engineers to the Army, West Point's first several decades of academics were unsurprisingly heavily oriented toward math and physical science, but what may surprise some is that just after its first decade of existence, West Point's curriculum also included "geography, history, and ethics" (Betros 6). However, West Point remained a school heavily focused on math and engineering, and, even today, every cadet, regardless of major, must take a large number of math and science courses, including a total of more than ten semesters of calculus, physics, chemistry, and engineering.

Within this heavy focus on engineering, though, the leadership at West Point has always recognized that officers must be able to clearly communicate their thoughts in writing and in speech, so some sort of humanities—whether a foreign language, ethics, law, or geography—has been part of the curriculum at USMA for almost as long as have math and science. English and composition became fixtures of the curriculum at the end of the nineteenth century and have remained there ever since, expanding to the point that

all cadets for several decades have had to take four semesters of English Department courses: basic composition, literature, philosophy, and advanced composition (Betros 9-17). These courses are titled, respectively, EN 101, EN 102, PY 201, and EN 302.

EN 101 is a typical freshman composition course and focuses on nonfiction, argumentative writing. The course normally involves a wide variety of nonfiction readings, generally broken down into essays about widely ranging topics such as current events, and a series of in-class and out-of-class argumentative essays that students have to compose about these topics. Recently, this course used a reader edited by Lee Jacobus entitled *A World of Ideas* and containing essays about government, justice, the individual, wealth and poverty, the mind, nature, ethics and morality, and gender and culture. These essays were written by authors including Rousseau, Gasset, Cicero, Douglass, Rawls, Arendt, Marx, Plato, Woolf, and Greer. EN 101 culminates in a final examination, what is called a Term End Examination (TEE) at West Point, of three hours requiring students to read assigned material in advance of the examination and then combine that material with readings given to them at the beginning of the TEE to produce an argumentative essay of approximately four to five pages in length. This core English course is particularly important with respect to the USMAPS English program because it is the benchmark of success for that program due to the immediate relationship between the two: EN 101 is the first undergraduate English course USMAPS graduates take after completing USMAPS English.

The three remaining core USMA English courses—EN 102, PY 201, and EN 302—form a logical sequence the foundation of which, for USMAPS graduates, was USMAPS English. EN 102 is a course taught during the second semester of freshman year that is very similar in structure and objectives to EN 101 but that uses literature instead of non-fiction essays to develop cadets' ability to critically read and write argumentative essays. PY 201, normally taken by sophomores, is a philosophy course but one that differs from many undergraduate introductory philosophy courses in that it

hardly addresses metaphysics and epistemology, two of the four major branches of philosophy. Instead, PY 201 provides cadets with a fairly short introduction to logic and then focuses on ethics, especially Just War Theory. For years, Michael Walzer's seminal work *Just and Unjust Wars* was the foundational text for this course, and the fact that it was written by a civilian who had never been in combat but who was extraordinarily insightful and intelligent made it a provocative, thought-provoking read for cadets and faculty alike.

EN 302 forms the capstone course for the USMA English program and has for more than two decades focused on teaching critical reading and argumentative writing via exposing cadets to the literature and, to a much lesser degree, film of a foreign culture. Each year or two, the course takes cadets to a different destination and requires them to read a number of texts about that destination and see a film or two about it. These texts normally involve a nonfiction primer on some of the essential history of the country being studied along with a reader containing short essays and a novel. Some of the destinations visited during the past two decades have included Russia, China, India, Cuba, Peru, Japan, South Africa, and Iran. These destinations have been illuminated by texts and movies ranging from Mario Vargo Llaso's *Lost in the Andes* to Catherine Merridale's *Night of Stone* to Kenneth Branagh's adaptation of *Henry V*. For many years, EN 302 culminated with the West Point Professional Writing Examination (WPPWE), a three-hour, in-class argumentative essay that cadets had to pass in order to pass the course. This examination was given at approximately the thirty-third lesson of a forty lesson course, and cadets who passed it—normally between two-thirds to three-quarters of students—were finished with the course and would receive a final grade no lower than a C+. Students who did not pass the WPPWE would have to continue taking the course and would take the WPPWE again, as a final examination, and would receive no higher than a C+ for a course grade. This examination was obviously a high-stakes entity and engendered passionate feelings in favor of and against it; ultimately, though, most cadets

reported anecdotally that the WPPWE forced them to hone their reading and writing skills and viewed it as a rite of passage they were proud to have completed.

The final component of the USMA academic program I will address is the faculty. For most of its existence, West Point had an almost entirely military faculty. During the early nineteen nineties, though, West Point began moving to a faculty comprised of roughly twenty percent civilians, and in recent years the number of civilian faculty at West Point has hovered in the twenty percent range. There were many reasons for this shift, but two of the primary ones were to reduce pressure on the operational officer corps because every officer at USMA is an officer not in the field army and to comply with Congressional mandates that West Point include more civilians on its faculty. The transition has gone smoothly, and cadets benefit greatly from having instructors who are civilian as well as military. In fact, and for example, the USMA Department of English and Philosophy has been fortunate to have on its faculty for almost two decades Dr. Elizabeth Samet, a Harvard undergraduate with a Yale Ph.D. in literature who is a phenomenal professor and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Soldier's Heart*.

The military component of the West Point faculty—which is spread across thirteen academic departments and covers psychology and sociology, law, social sciences, physics, computer science, engineering, English, geography, foreign languages, and history—has two main elements, a rotating junior military faculty and a much smaller senior military faculty. The "rotators," as they are known, are normally officers who have served in the Army for six to eight years and done well and who also have strong undergraduate credentials. These officers are selected by each Department and then sent to the finest graduate schools in the country for two years to receive a master's degree; once they have completed graduate school, they come to West Point to teach for three years and then return to the Army for their next assignment. The senior military faculty number only four to five officers in each Department and have usually taught at USMA as rotators. These individuals were selected to return to West Point after having been sent

to graduate school for a doctorate, and they comprise the leadership of the departments, along with the senior civilians.

This faculty model is not without its problems, foremost among them that the majority of the faculty during any given year are inexperienced in the art of teaching. However, the primary focus of the faculty at USMA is to teach, not do research, and the rotators and junior civilians are bright, well educated, energetic, and passionate about teaching and interacting with cadets. Every year, the USMA faculty is rated the "most accessible" faculty in America in the *Princeton Review*, and it is not uncommon for instructors to meet with cadets at times ranging from 6 AM to almost midnight to give them additional assistance, along with the long hours they habitually devote to lesson preparation, grading papers, and conducting individual conferences with students. Additionally, USMA does not have any graduate programs, which is another reason that the faculty are so focused on teaching. Finally, class sizes at West Point are very small—the average class is fifteen or sixteen cadets, and no class is ever larger than nineteen—so faculty and students engage with one another in a close-knit, extremely interactive environment.

USMAPS

Within this (very) brief history of West Point, particularly West Point academics, fits the focus of this study: the West Point Preparatory School. As its name clearly indicates, the entire focus of USMAPS is to prepare young men and women not only to gain admittance to USMA but also to graduate from that institution four years later; additionally, the hope of all who work at USMAPS is that Prepsters will thrive, not merely survive, at West Point. In the upcoming paragraphs of this chapter, I will review the highlights of the history of USMAPS before moving on to how students are admitted

to the Prep School and then, most importantly, how they are prepared at USMAPS for success at USMA.

Most militaries of the world have a fundamental division of soldiers into officers and enlisted personnel, but those militaries use widely varying models to bring people into the military, and they also offer quite different paths to become an officer. Some countries essentially create their officer corps from among senior enlisted soldiers so that officers, even lower-ranking officers, are individuals who have served in the enlisted ranks for at least several years prior to becoming officers. Others, such as the United States, form their officer corps largely from college-educated young men and women who have little to no military experience beyond that gained during their commission process. In the U.S. Army, that process occurs almost exclusively via three mechanisms: Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs, Officer Candidate School (OCS), and USMA; in times of war, battlefield commissions can also occur, in which an enlisted soldier receives an on-the-spot commission to officer, but those kinds of advancements occur rarely. ROTC occurs at college campuses across America and is a four-year program; OCS takes place at a few large Army posts, lasts only ninety days, and focuses on noncommissioned officers with at least an associate's degree along with four-year graduates who were not in ROTC or at USMA; and the commissioning process at USMA takes place at West Point.

The relevance of the preceding paragraph to USMAPS is that for more than one hundred years after its founding, USMA admitted students only directly from high school or, in a few cases, from other colleges. However, and as stated in the Introduction of this dissertation, in 1916 Congress and the Army decided to significantly increase the size of West Point, and a portion of this increase took the form of adding 180 admissions slots for Regular Army and National Guard personnel, i.e., enlisted soldiers (Betros 64). Additionally, because many of these soldiers were not as academically well prepared as the entrants coming to West Point via the traditional route of entering USMA directly

after graduating from high school, the War Department—the precursor to today's Department of Defense—received permission from Congress to establish a series of preparatory schools to help prepare the enlisted soldiers headed to West Point to become cadets.

These preparatory schools, some of which were in Europe as well as in Hawaii, the Panama Canal Zone, and the Philippines, faced a difficult time preparing their students for West Point because of the lack of a uniform curriculum and well-resourced faculty, so in 1946 GEN Maxwell Taylor established a consolidated preparatory school—USMAPS—at Stewart Army Airfield in Newburgh, NY. The school stayed there until moving to Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, in 1957; to Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey, in 1975; and, to West Point itself in 2011, approximately three miles from the main cadet area but within the grounds of the Military Academy.

Admission

While the mission of USMAPS has remained constant—prepare young men and women for admission to and graduation from USMA—the student body at USMAPS has varied considerably, and, of course, that student body is a direct reflection of the admissions policies in effect at different times during the history of USMAPS. On a larger scale, the admissions policies of USMA unsurprisingly heavily influenced those of USMAPS, and the policies of the former institution present a fascinating, and quite germane, look into the challenges facing an institution that has many obvious advantages in selecting high-quality candidates—free tuition, room, and board; prestige; service to the nation; and a guaranteed job upon graduation in an organization offering outstanding health care and retirement benefits—but that also faces arduous obstacles in that selection process: a Spartan lifestyle, including constant inspections, rigorous discipline, and the wearing of uniforms; an extremely demanding academic, military, physical, and moral

program; and, perhaps most importantly, the constant threat of having to be in the first line of defense of the nation's vital interests.

As will become clear in later paragraphs and chapters, West Point, like its preparatory school, has had to always walk the fine line between getting the most competitive candidates and ensuring that it has enough at least minimally qualified candidates to fill, or almost fill, each entering class. Indeed, for many of its more than two hundred years of existence, West Point was not able to fill its entering classes, a quite surprising fact, given the renown of the institution. For example, during the decade-and-a-half following the Second World War, West Point classes averaged roughly only eighty percent of their authorized incoming strength (72). This constant tension between getting candidates with a high likelihood of graduation and simply filling entering classes with marginally qualified applicants led to a variety of measures on the part of West Point, including vacillating between requiring a written entrance examination and accepting certificates of achievement from high schools and colleges; working with Congressmen and Senators to help them select the best possible candidates from their districts and states; changing the criteria West Point uses for admission from those focusing solely on academic indicators to those including athletic and leadership as well as academic achievement; and, of course, instituting a preparatory school to help prepare candidates who offer a great deal to the Academy but who need to improve some combination of their academic, athletic, and/or leadership accomplishments (69-76). For the past more than fifty years, West Point has focused its admission criteria on the "whole man," now "whole person," concept, a focus that results in awarding each candidate a Whole Candidate Score consisting of the College Entrance Examination and (high school) Rank (CEER), leadership potential, and athletic scores.

Another significant aspect of USMA admissions policy has been its relatively recent focus on minorities, especially women, African Americans, and Hispanics. This focus is especially important for USMAPS because USMA admissions policies

essentially are USMAPS admissions policies, and one of the most important value-added components of USMAPS for USMA is the former's role in enabling the latter to meet its class composition goals with respect to minorities. Women as a category are not often considered to be minorities, but in the Army at large and at USMA and USMAPS in particular, they are clearly part of a minority of the total population, having comprised approximately 15-20% of that population for the past several decades. For most of its existence, West Point was a bastion of white males; African Americans did not become part of the Corps in any number more than a handful until the 1960s, and even then they numbered fewer than five percent of the student body, and women were not admitted at all until 1976 and numbered less than ten percent of cadets (Admissions). The decision to admit minorities, especially African Americans and women, sparked widespread, heated debate in many parts of the U.S. populace and within the Army because of long-standing negative attitudes toward these two groups and their perceived inability to succeed at West Point and in the Army as commissioned officers. For example, the USMA Superintendent at the time the decision was made to admit women to West Point, LTG Sidney Berry, a career officer who had spent his adult life in the Army and had served in combat in Vietnam, felt so strongly that admitting women to West Point was wrong that he seriously considered resigning instead of overseeing their admission to USMA (Berry).

Moreover, the concerted effort that has taken place since the 1970s to recruit minorities for admission—for example, by having officers within the Admissions Department actively recruit women, African Americans, and Hispanics—has been contentious because admissions to USMA is in one respect a zero-sum game: there are only a limited number of slots in each entering class, and for much of West Point's history, the number of applicants has been far in excess of the number of available slots, so every young man or woman who receives an admissions slot is getting that slot instead of a number of other young men or women. Additionally, based on any number of

criteria such as high school transcripts and class rank, standardized test scores, leadership, physical fitness, and extracurricular activities—criteria encapsulated in a candidate's Whole Candidate Score, a metric that will be discussed in detail in Chapters Four, Five, and Six—minorities have been collectively less well qualified than other applicants. This contentious discussion is thus very similar to the admissions discussions taking place in college campuses across America, as evidenced by countless heated exchanges at those campuses regarding the merits of affirmative action, the relative importance of intercollegiate athletics, and the role of gender in the composition of student bodies, etc.

At West Point, many studies have been done on the performance of minorities at the Academy and then in the Army, and, generally speaking, minority cadets have slightly under-performed the rest of cadets in a wide variety of metrics, including physical fitness, GPA, class rank, military performance, and length of service and performance in the Army (Betros). The specifics of these studies are beyond the pale of this dissertation, but what is certainly very important to note is that these differences are not sizeable and, even more importantly, that these studies do not account for a wealth of crucially important variables. For example, no studies have been done on the impact that minority West Point graduates have had on the Soldiers they have led, both minority and non-minority, with respect to the attitudes, aspirations, and accomplishments of these Soldiers that were positively influenced in enormous ways by the gender or race of these minority leaders. Additionally, all kinds of factors influence the aforementioned under-performance of minority cadets—military background, high school preparation and opportunities, the emotional challenges resulting from feeling that one has to constantly prove oneself, among others—but many, many minority cadets have performed exceedingly well at West Point and contributed untold value to USMA and then the Army.

Ultimately, study after study after study has shown that organizations that are diverse—in all kinds of ways, certainly including race and gender—perform better than organizations that are not, and the Army has seen more and more benefits of being a diverse organization as that diversity has become embedded within the Army. The Army has in fact become much more diverse over the past several decades, and the leadership of the Army has made a concerted effort to ensure that upcoming leaders literally look more like those they lead, for a variety of hugely important reasons such as the ability to connect with Soldiers and the impact that gender and racial diversity has on an Army unit's ability to relate to the society it protects. Additionally, as the Army continues to become more diverse and inclusive—as evidenced by the recent decision to open all branches, including infantry and armor, to women and to allow women to attend Ranger school, the Army's most demanding course and one of the toughest, most rigorous military schools in the world as well as attempt to become Special Forces (Green Beret) Soldiers—more minorities of all categories will feel more welcome, perpetuating and strengthening a virtuous cycle begun several decades ago.

Thus, the decisions made by the Academy decades ago to actively seek minorities for admission to West Point have borne wonderful fruit, and all indications are that those decisions will result in better and better leaders of character for the Army in upcoming years and decades. The Academy is constantly refining its admissions goals with respect to class composition, and the current Superintendent, LTG Robert Caslen, has stated on many occasions that he wants to see a more diverse West Point, one that includes an increase of women from just above 15% to more than 20% of the Corps and an increase of African Americans from under 10% to close to 15% (Admissions). He has directed his Admissions Department to do everything possible to meet that goal, and the leader of that Department, COL Deborah McDonald, has done yeoman's work to help West Point reach that goal; for example, this year's class at USMAPS is comprised of 49% African Americans, the highest percentage ever. Additionally, USMA recently created the Office

of Diversity and selected as its Director LTC (Retired) Donald Outing, an African American who served an Army career that included teaching mathematics at USMA and USMAPS, and his office has already taken great steps to better publicize West Point in minority communities and to conduct outreach to those communities. As more and more minorities experience great success in the Army, as evidenced by Vincent Brooks, USMA ’80 and an African American male, being promoted to the Army’s highest peacetime rank—four-star general—to Nadja West, USMA ’82 and an African American female, becoming a three-star general and the Army’s first Surgeon General, more and more minorities will undoubtedly look at the Army as a place that will provide them with wonderful opportunities.

With respect to the admissions policies and processes in place for USMAPS, those policies stem directly from the admissions policies and processes of USMA, and they have faced the aforementioned challenges of trying to bring in the highest quality candidates while filling all available slots. Indeed, during the early years of the preparatory school program, only approximately one in ten of the enlisted candidates who studied at the various preparatory schools founded in 1916 and succeeding years gained entrance to West Point (76). The fundamental question of exactly how the Prep School would best benefit USMA with respect to the exact combination of attributes sought in candidates for USMAPS has changed considerably during its almost century-long existence. The answer to that question has included focusing on enlisted personnel, who at one time constituted the majority of students admitted to USMAPS; to focusing on civilians who were highly qualified but not the highest ranking candidates from their congressional districts or state; to the current focus of Cadet Candidates who help the Academy meet its class composition goals with respect to diversity and recruited athletes (85).

An additional challenge that USMAPS has faced with respect to its admissions policies, and part of the reason for the aforementioned changes in admissions priorities, is

the succession of different headquarters to which it has been answerable. From its inception in 1946 at Stewart Army Airfield until its move to Ft. Belvoir in 1957, USMAPS reported to the USMA Superintendent and tailored its admissions policies to his priorities. However, from 1957 until 1992, the Prep School reported to the Commander, Training and Doctrine (TRADOC), whose admissions priorities did not always mesh completely with those of USMA. Since 1992, however, the Prep School has been under the command of the USMA Superintendent, and all indications are that this arrangement will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Currently, and since 1996, the focus of the admissions policies for USMAPS has been to attract to USMA, via USMAPS, candidates who help the Academy meet its class composition goals with respect to diversity and athletics. Recruited athletes comprise almost forty percent of recent USMAPS classes, and those classes have also been composed of a large number of minorities. In fact, the last several USMAPS classes have had a majority of minorities, and, as stated previously, almost fifty percent of the current class of two hundred forty is African American (USMAPS website). These students have notably lower CEER and Whole Candidate Scores than their Direct Admit Counterparts, but, as also stated earlier, they have graduated at rates comparable to those of Direct Admits, albeit with several nuances that will be addressed in Chapters V and VI.

Interestingly, the admission process to USMAPS has changed considerably over the years, as has the philosophy in place with respect to the number of entering students who successfully complete the year-long USMAPS program. As opposed to the first many decades of its existence, the past two decades at USMAPS have seen a requirement that students be disqualified from USMA in order to be admitted to USMAPS. That is, candidates apply to USMA, and of those who are not qualified for admission to USMA, more than two hundred will receive an offer of admission to USMAPS. The largest, by far, reason for being disqualified is academics, and the largest component of that category is SAT/ACT scores below minimal acceptable levels, which for several years have been

560 Math and 560 Reading Comprehension and comparable ACT scores (USMA Admissions).

Much has been written about the efficacy and, even more fundamentally, fairness of using standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT as admissions criteria (Furr and Solomon, Hill, et al), especially when these kinds of tests play the outsized role they do at many colleges and universities, West Point included. With respect to the efficacy of the SAT or ACT as a predictor of success in the college classroom, the published literature is inconclusive. Some studies—for example, William Hiss's "Defining Promise: Optional Standardized Testing Policies in American Universities"—argue that there is little correlation between these test scores and how students perform in college. However, others—such as Michael Furr and Cecelia Solano's "On the Value of Standardized Admissions Tests"—assert that, once factors such as average GPA of the major in question and overall academic level of the institutions being studied are controlled for, SAT/ACT scores are strongly predictive of undergraduate performance. Indeed, at West Point, every study done on this topic by the institution's internal research branch—and there have been many such studies over the past more than forty years—has shown that an incoming student's CEER score, a significant part of which is the SAT and/or ACT score, predicts with an extremely high degree of accuracy how that student will perform in the classroom and as a cadet in general (Betros). Additionally, the research for this dissertation—research that will be discussed in detail in later chapters—revealed an almost one-to-one correspondence between a cadet's SAT verbal score and that cadet's subsequent performance in EN 101. That is, the highest SAT verbal scores corresponded very closely to the highest EN 101 GPAs, and the lowest SAT verbal scores corresponded to the lowest EN 101 GPAs; additionally, the second, third, and fourth quintiles of SAT verbal scores corresponded directly with the second, third, and fourth quintiles of EN 101 GPAs, respectively.

Having said that, this information certainly does not entail that there are not exceptions to this norm; that is, there have certainly been students with low verbal SAT scores who did quite well in EN 101, along with students with high verbal SAT scores who did not fare well in EN 101. In fact, over the course of my twelve years of teaching at West Point, I can recall a number of those exceptions from among just my own students. Moreover, the information above also certainly does not mean that using SAT scores as a key component of the USMA admissions criteria is not problematic or does not raise significant concerns regarding fairness and justice. It is a well-documented fact that SAT scores have a very strong correlation with household income and all of the attendant advantages that accrue to children growing up in those households. It is also a well-documented fact that minority households have, on average, lower incomes than do White households, so it certainly stands to reason that minority students are going to score lower on the SAT, on average, than do White students. Thus, questions of social justice become immediately apparent when attempting to determine whether and/or how to use SAT scores as part of the admissions rubric: on the one hand, these scores are strongly predictive of success in EN 101 and at West Point in general; on the other hand, students earning these scores are playing on a far from even field, and many students with low SAT scores have done extremely well as cadets and then as officers, while students with high SAT scores have been separated from the Academy or have performed quite poorly as officers.

The resolution of this problem is far afield of this dissertation's focus, and the volume of literature, some of it highly emotional, written about the efficacy and/or fairness of using SAT scores as admission criteria makes it clear that a resolution is not on the horizon. As a researcher who has now done a fair amount of research about this topic but who is by no means an expert in it, especially given that, like so much research, the meaning of various studies about the SAT depends heavily on the details—many of them quite technical—of those studies, I believe that West Point has taken a reasonable

approach to this problem. That is, West Point's approach of requiring SAT scores and using them as an important part of the admissions process is understandable, given the kinds of correlations I have discussed. However, the fact that West Point admits many students who are below—in some cases, well below—the minimum threshold of 560 on each part of the SAT is also understandable, given the other kinds of correlations I have discussed, especially with respect to minority applicants, many of whom come from low-income households without the kinds of advantages that lead to strong SAT scores but who nonetheless succeed at West Point and afterwards in the Army and who enable these venerable institutions to be agents for positive change and to better reflect the society they serve. Additionally, West Point has made SAT scores an important part but by no means the only part of the admissions process. High school transcripts, extracurricular activities, and leadership potential play key roles in each applicant's admissions file, so those students without strong SAT or ACT scores can make up considerable ground by virtue of these other factors.

For those students ultimately admitted to USMAPS, the guiding philosophy of the school with respect to its students has changed considerably. For many years, USMAPS used what was in effect an attrition model; for example, during the eighties and nineties, more than three hundred candidates would report to USMAPS on Reception Day, and only approximately half would successfully complete the program ten months later (Admissions). The Dean for much of that time period was infamous for calling students to his office during the school day at all points during the academic year, telling them they were no longer welcome at USMAPS because of various academic deficiencies, and sending them home within days of that news (Krug). For the past decade or so, though, the mindset has moved to the other end of the spectrum to become very much a developmental model. During this time period, the entering classes have been much smaller, approximately two hundred thirty to two hundred forty, but the percentage of candidates successfully completing the program has greatly increased, to more than

eighty percent (USMAPS website). Additionally, of those Cadet Candidates who successfully complete USMAPS, more than ninety percent are offered admission to USMA, and the vast majority of those who receive that offer take it (Admissions). For the very small number of students who successfully complete the USMAPS program but do not receive an offer of admission to USMA, the primary reason they do not receive that offer is because they completed USMAPS but did so with a variety of problems such as a very low GPA and/or standardized test scores, a pending disciplinary problem, or a physical condition such as recent major surgery that precludes their being able to complete Beast Barracks. For students in this last category, they will often times receive a "letter of assurance" from USMA Admissions stating that they will receive an offer of admission to the following year's class, if they are physically able to perform the tasks required of cadets.

Entering candidates, whether at USMA or USMAPS, are the lifeblood of both institutions, and admissions policies directly and pervasively impact the characteristics of each admitted class. As the previous several paragraphs have made clear, USMAPS has always been directly impacted by changes in USMA admissions policies, the most recent of which is a strong emphasis on using USMAPS as a key part of the process of trying to attract and then retain classes of greater diversity than have ever been admitted to West Point. Upcoming sections of this chapter will discuss the impact of an increasingly diverse, especially with respect to race, student body on life at USMAPS.

A Day in the Life of a Cadet Candidate

After this concise history of USMA, especially its academic program, and the admissions policies of USMA and USMAPS, it is time to move to the heart of this chapter, essentially a day in the life of a Cadet Candidate. This exploration of the daily life of CCs will provide invaluable context for Chapters Five and Six by providing the

audience with the details of what it is like to be a Cadet Candidate, and especially what it is like to navigate the academic program at USMAPS. After exploring Reception Day (R-Day), Cadet Candidate Basic Training (CCBT), and the military, physical, and athletic aspects of the USMAPS, this chapter will present the most important part of its context by examining in great detail the academic program at the Prep School. Once that examination is complete, the audience will have a clear picture of what being a CC is like and how CCs have been prepared for the rigors of the West Point and its academic program, especially the English component of that program.

The Summer

R-Day is a day that every CC will remember for the rest of his or her life. Because the great majority of incoming students to USMAPS have no military background, R-Day is their first experience with the military. During this one day, a young man or woman wakes up as a civilian and goes to bed as a member of the United States Army. This young person reports to West Point early in the morning, receives a welcome briefing, is given ninety seconds to say goodbye to her or his family and friends, and then is turned over to the cadre, who in no uncertain terms inform the Cadet Candidate that she or he has crossed the threshold into military life. The CC is transported to the grounds of USMAPS, a self-contained campus comprised of one large building that includes the students' living quarters—known as barracks—dining facility, classrooms, physical fitness facilities, athletic fields, and offices for the staff and faculty.

Once the incoming CCs arrive at USMAPS, they are shepherded from station to station, where they receive their uniforms, have their height and weight taken, get their heads shaved—women must wear their hair in a bun or have it not extend beyond their collar—put their issued items in their rooms, in a very specific manner, and learn how to wear the Army fatigue uniform and march. At the end of a very long day, all Cadet Candidates are formed into companies—each company has approximately eighty

students, and each company is in turn divided into three platoons, each of which has three squads of roughly nine people each—and formed up on the football field, where they take the oath of enlistment and then march back to the barracks.

During what is called Cadet Candidate Basic Training (CCBT), a three-week period of summer training that begins on R-Day and continues until the week before classes begin in mid-August, CCs wake every morning at 0530, conduct physical training, and then attend a series of classes and lectures during which they learn about all aspects of life in the military and at USMAPS. On R-Day, all CCs must turn in their cell phones, and they do not have access to them or to any electronic devices during the three weeks of CCBT. This period of time also includes a number of military training events such as learning how to fire a rifle and being evaluated for marksmanship, conducting road marches while wearing ruck sacks and full military gear, and learning how to maneuver as infantry squads and platoons. CCBT concludes with a full-day training exercise called The Crucible, during which CCs must negotiate a series of obstacles while running in full gear from station to station. At the completion of CCBT, Cadet Candidates have become familiar with the basics of military life and, more importantly, have accomplished the noteworthy feat of successfully transitioning from civilians into soldiers. Even though this experience is quite demanding and a shock to the system for most Cadet Candidates, the vast majority—more than 95%--make it through this stage because of their grit and determination, along with the demanding but very supportive leadership of their cadet, NCO, and officer cadre.

The next stage of life at USMAPS begins with what is called Reorgy Week, during which Cadet Candidates shift their focus from military endeavors to preparing for the academic year. During this week, CCs re-gain use of their cell phones, and they also are issued their laptops; they pay for their laptops and all other issued items—uniforms, textbooks, etc.—from their monthly salary, which ranges from approximately $600/month after taxes for those CCs who were not in the Army prior to beginning

USMAPS to roughly $1000/month for those CCs who are called "prior service" Cadet Candidates because they were enlisted soldiers prior to R-Day (Philip). An additional very important part of Reorgy Week is the academic testing that occurs during this week. Three of the four academic departments—Math, Science, and English—give various placement and assessment tests during this period and then use the results of those examinations to place and/or assess Cadet Candidates; I will address the English assessments later in this chapter, once I turn to the USMAPS English program.

The Four Pillars

Once Reorgy Week is complete, the main event of the USMAPS experience commences: the academic year. All four pillars of life at USMAPS—military, athletic, ethical, and academic—are vital components of developing Cadet Candidates into young women and men ready for life at West Point, but the reason that most students are at USMAPS is because they were academically disqualified from entering USMA, so the academic pillar is obviously paramount. However, before exploring that pillar in detail, it is important to delve into the other three so that the reader will realize the extent of the crucial role they play in Cadet Candidate development.

Military. The United States Military Academy Preparatory School, as its name indicates, obviously has a military component to its program, and this component is quite challenging and important. Life at USMAPS takes place underneath the umbrella of a whole range of military guidelines, including uniforms, shaving and haircuts, formations, a specified daily schedule, room inspections, military courtesies, passes to leave USMAPS, a chain of command, and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Students must be in uniform for the vast majority of their time at USMAPS; those uniforms range from the daily "fatigues" uniform to the dress uniform worn on special occasions to the physical training uniform to even the "Cadet Casual" uniform, which consists of slacks and a collared shirt. To give the reader an idea of just how regimented life at USMAPS

can be, following is the description of the Cadet Casual uniform from page twenty-four of the eighty-one page regulation covering all aspects of life at the Prep School, USMAPS Regulation 1-1: "Cadet Casual consists of Straight leg, full-length cotton khaki, brown or tan pants (No cargo pants, jeans, or athletic pants); Short-sleeved solid color collared polo style shirt with a USMA/USMAPS logo on the left breast; White undershirt (optional); socks; brown or black leather shoes (No sandals, sneakers, or clogs); All brown or black belt; the shirt must be tucked in for males."

In addition to constantly being in uniform, students at USMAPS also must attend daily weekday morning formations, at either 0710 or 0730, prior to class, and males must shave every day, even on weekends. Cadet Candidates live their lives according to a specified schedule, which includes the aforementioned morning formations in addition to normally waking up at 0600 in order to clean their rooms, attending class from 0745-1150, lunch, afternoon study period (ASP) from 1245-1400 (2 PM), physical education or military science classes from 1410-1500, athletic team and club time from 1500-1830, dinner from 1730-1900, evening study period (ESP) from 1930-2200, chain of command time from 2200-2245, TAPS (accountability checks) from 2245-2300, and lights out at 2300. As part of this schedule, rooms must be kept constantly clean and organized, in accordance with three levels of cleanliness: AMI (morning inspection), during which CCs are not allowed to sleep in their rooms and must have their drawers and closet doors open; PMI (afternoon and evening inspection), during which cadets may have their drawers and closets closed and may sleep, except during ASP and ESP; and SAMI (Saturday morning inspection), during which rooms are being inspected and must be in the highest state of cleanliness and organization.

At all times at USMAPS, Cadet Candidates must exhibit proper standards of behavior and decorum, which includes saluting officers, addressing all staff and faculty in a professional manner, and following all of the rules within Regulation 1-1. Of note is that CCs are severely punished under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) for

using any illegal drugs and must undergo frequent, random urinalysis tests, and no CC under the age of twenty-one is allowed to consume alcohol. Those CCs twenty-one or over may consume alcohol but never on the grounds of USMAPS and always in accordance with strict guidelines. Cadet Candidates in good standing may normally leave the grounds of UMSAPS on Friday and Saturday evenings but must return to USMAPS prior to midnight and sign in to the daily log, unless they are on pass. CCs are authorized one pass during Quarter One, two passes during Quarters Two and Three, and three passes during Quarter Four. While on pass, CCs may depart USMAPS and not return until the end of the pass, normally Sunday evening at 1900, but only CCs not on academic probation or in disciplinary trouble may take passes.

The final two aspects of military life at USMAPS are the chain of command and the UCMJ. Every military organization has some kind of chain of command, and USMAPS is no exception. USMAPS is organized into a battalion consisting of three companies, each of which has three platoons, divided in turn into three squads. Each of these units has leaders, ranging from the battalion commander to the company commanders to the platoon and then squad leaders. Additionally, the chain of command consists of various other positions such as the operations officer, supply officer, platoon sergeants, et al. The purpose of the chain of command is to have in place a hierarchy of positions so that the various units run by that chain of leaders can function effectively, and the leadership experience gained by students at USMAPS by virtue of being in the chain of command—every CC occupies at least one chain of command position while at USMAPS—is invaluable. Overseeing the CC chain of command is an officer and noncommissioned officer chain of command, consisting of a lieutenant colonel commandant, a deputy commandant in the rank of major, a captain operations officer, a master sergeant serving as the First Sergeant, and company tactical officers and noncommissioned tactical officers in the ranks of captain and sergeant first class,

respectively. These individuals guide the CC chain of command and ensure that those students in the chain of command are performing their duties in a professional manner.

While life at USMAPS normally functions smoothly and in accordance with the regulations and laws in place to govern that life, there are times when the final aspect of the military component of USMAPS, the UCMJ, comes into play to deal with those times it does not. Students at USMAPS are soldiers in the Army, and as such they are bound by the Uniform Code of Military Justice. This set of laws governs all aspects of life in the military, and it is enforced by the chain of command. Every soldier in the Army is subject to its provisions, and the commander of every unit beginning at the company level has various levels of authority under the UCMJ. At USMAPS, the Commandant is the commander and has the authority to enforce the UCMJ at what is called the field grade level, and the company tactical officers are the commanders of the USMAPS companies and have what is known as company grade authority. The UCMJ has provisions for all kind of infractions, ranging from disrespect to alcohol-related incidents to sexual assault to murder, and, generally speaking, the more severe the infraction and resultant punishment, the more senior the officer has to be to impose that punishment. Cadet Candidates are well aware that they are bound by the UCMJ, and, fortunately, very few CCs run afoul of its provisions during any given school year.

Physical. Army officers must be physically fit in order to meet the demands of life in the military and also in order to lead by example so that their soldiers will be inspired to attain and maintain a high level of physical fitness, so it is no surprise that physical education plays an important role in life at USMAPS. In order to be admitted to USMAPS, via applying to USMA, all applicants must pass the Candidate Fitness Assessment (CFA), a six event physical fitness test consisting of a basketball throw while kneeling on both knees, pull-ups, a shuttle run, push-ups, sit-ups, and a one mile run (Admissions). Once a student is admitted to USMAPS, that student must continue to demonstrate proficiency in the CFA as well as begin taking the physical test that he or

she will take during the first week of summer training at USMA and then for the four years at USMA and every year while serving as an officer in the Army: the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). The APFT is a three event test consisting of sit-ups during two minutes, push-ups during two minutes, and a two mile run. The sit-ups and push-ups must be performed to strict standards, and male Cadet Candidates must perform at least forty-two push-ups and fifty-three sit-ups while doing the two-mile run in no slower than 15: 54 in order to pass. For females, the corresponding minimum standards are nineteen push-ups, fifty-three sit-ups, and 18: 54 (APFT website). Additionally, there can be no longer than a ten minute break among events, and the events are normally scored by members of the chain of command.

Cadet Candidates take physical education classes twice weekly, and CCs who are not in compliance with the aforementioned APFT standards must participate in remedial physical training, which occurs three times weekly from 0540-0630, so students participating in this program normally must wake up at 0500. Most USMAPS students are quite physically fit, and the majority of them perform at levels far higher than the minimum standards listed above. Ultimately, many USMAPS students will conduct Army training while wearing ruck sacks weighing as much as eighty pounds while wearing body armor vests weighing more than twenty-five pounds, in addition to wearing a helmet and boots, and they will be expected to lead from the front and set the physical standard for their units. USMAPS students are known as the "Vanguards" for the entering Plebe classes at West Point, and as such they are expected to demonstrate not only the military expertise they learned at USMAPS but also the high level of physical fitness they attained while at the Prep School.

Moral. The third pillar of the USMAPS experience is the moral-ethical pillar. While most students are at USMAPS primarily in order to raise their academic and study skills, it is the moral-ethical foundation they develop and refine while at USMAPS that will underpin all of their efforts at West Point. Life at USMAPS is quite challenging, and

it is even more so at USMA, and the pressure to lie, cheat, or steal in order to meet expectations can be quite high. However, the Cadet Honor Code is both straightforward and unyielding: A cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do (USMA). Cadet Candidates are not cadets and are thus not technically bound by the Cadet Honor Code, but CCs receive honor briefings during the summer that make it clear that they are expected to live in accordance with the Honor Code, and they also participate in weekly classes that focus on honorable living.

Those Cadet Candidates who fall short of the standards of the Honor Code are enrolled in the Honor Mentorship program, a program designed to provide the enrollee with the opportunity to reflect upon his/her transgression and to demonstrate that he/she has learned from it and will not commit another honor-related violation. This program involves working with a staff or faculty mentor and writing a number of reflections and attending several counseling sessions with the honor mentor. At the conclusion of the program, the Cadet Candidate briefs the entire battalion on what he or she has learned as a result of the program and offers advice to the battalion regarding how to live honorably and not fall prey to the pressure to violate one's honor in order to avoid disciplinary action or academic shortfalls. Fortunately, and as has been the case with UCMJ violations, very few—for example, only five or six per year during the past five years—Cadet Candidates commit honor violations because of the education they receive about the Honor Code, the expectation they have that honor-related infractions will be dealt with seriously, their awareness of the vigilance of the staff and faculty regarding the Honor Code, and, most importantly, their own good character, which normally blossoms when nurtured in the fashion previously detailed.

Academics. As stated previously, the primary reason that students are at USMAPS is to improve themselves academically, so the fourth pillar of the USMAPS experience—academics—is demonstrably the most important of the four. Since 1996, every Cadet Candidate at USMAPS has had to be disqualified in some fashion or another in order to

be offered admission to USMAPS, and the great majority of those students have been disqualified because of academics, especially standardized test scores (Admissions/ OEMA data). As a result of these factors, by far the greatest amount of time and energy of the staff and faculty and, of course, the students themselves goes to academics. Upcoming paragraphs will address the key components of the academics program at USMAPS, including the courses, daily schedule, classroom experience, homework policies, additional instruction opportunities, intervention procedures for struggling students, and faculty. After examining all of the aforementioned aspects of the USMAPS academic program, I will move to an in-depth discussion of the most important part of this chapter: the USMAPS English program and its preparation of Cadet Candidates for the USMA English program.

Courses. For the first almost sixty years of its existence, USMAPS focused its academic efforts on two subjects—math and English—along with the SAT. The intent behind this focus was understandable because math and English clearly play such pivotal roles in science, math, or engineering courses, on the one hand, and all humanities courses, on the other hand. The details of the English course will be addressed shortly, and the mathematics course divides Cadet Candidates into three groups based on their high school transcripts and standardized test scores and orients these students towards algebra and trigonometry, pre-calculus, or calculus, as appropriate. The majority of students take pre-calculus, while students with the weakest math skills take algebra and trigonometry, and students with the strongest math skills take calculus. Additionally, while standardized testing in general and the SAT in particular are contentious subjects, as noted earlier, Academy data show a strong correlation between USMA class rank at graduation, which is largely based on academic performance, and incoming SAT scores (Betros 82). Thus, devoting a large part of the academics experience to attempting to improve SAT scores seemed reasonable, and that devotion did pay dividends in terms of the kinds of improvements on SAT scores that occurred after students had spent a

semester focused in large part on academic work designed to bring about those improvements. For example, during the thirty year period of 1970-2000, the average SAT verbal score improved by more than one hundred points, as did the average SAT math score, based on incoming SAT scores and scores earned after taking the SAT after having been at USMAPS for a semester (OEMA).

In 2004, USMAPS decided to add a third course, and a third department, in addition to the math and English departments, focused on study skills. This course, the Student Development Course (SDC)—part of the Center for Enhanced Performance, the aforementioned third department—has focused on test-taking strategies, speed reading, learning about different kinds of cognition, focus and organization, and counseling, and it was added to the curriculum because many of the USMAPS faculty felt that a large number of students were deficient in these kinds of basic study skills and hoped that having a department focused on these kinds of skills would enable the math and English departments to not have to spend so much time on these basic aspects of being a student. Moreover, just this past year—Academic Year 2014-2015—two additional important changes occurred within the USMAPS academic program: a fourth course, science, was added, and the SDC dramatically changed its emphasis.

For several years, discussion had been taking place between USMAPS and Academy leaders regarding the potential benefits and possibility of adding a science course to the USMAPS curriculum. USMAPS' two sister institutions—the Air Force and Naval Academy Preparatory Schools—had long had such a science course, and many USMAPS students were having trouble with Plebe chemistry, so a decision was finally made two years ago to move forward with adding a science course to USMAPS, and that course began last academic year, in January. The course focuses on chemistry, physics, and biology—biology was added to the USMA curriculum in the fall of 2015 as a course that could meet part of the core science requirements—and was added to the curriculum in part to increase the academic load of USMAPS students so that they would not suffer a

shock when transitioning to managing five or six academic courses as cadets while having had to manage only two or three such courses as Cadet Candidates.

Schedule. The preceding section on the military pillar addressed in detail the daily schedule at USMAPS, a schedule that is chock full of activities from 0530 until 2300. The academic schedule is a sub-set of that schedule, and it, too, is quite robust. Students attend classes every day of the week from 0745 until 1150. Each class lasts for seventy-five minutes, and there are ten minutes between each set of periods. Students take math and English every day, and they have the Student Development Course and Science every other day. Additionally, they have physical education classes twice weekly and military science classes once per week. After lunch, which occurs in the Dining Facility (DFAC) from 1155-1240—and on a related note, Cadet Candidates receive all of their meals free of charge as part of their room and board, and they eat those meals in the cafeteria-style DFAC—students have Afternoon Study Period (ASP) from 1245-1400. During ASP, students may attend Additional Instruction (AI) with their instructors, have formal, mandatory conferences with their instructors, or do homework in their rooms or in designated study areas. The end of ASP is the end of the formal part of the academic day, although those students not engaged in a varsity sport or club—approximately fifty percent of the student body—have additional time during the afternoon available for academics.

The evening part of the academic schedule is an integral, very important part of that schedule because it includes the Evening Study Period (ESP). This part of the evening normally runs from 1930-2200 (7:30 PM to 10 PM) and includes a host of guidelines designed to enhance study conditions. During ESP, students may not use cellphones, and they may not use their computers for purposes other than academic ones. They may study together in groups, and there are designated areas in the academic wing for such groups: second-floor classrooms are available for individual, quiet study, while third-floor classrooms are for collaborative work. During ESP, the battalion Staff Duty

Officer (SDO) walks through the barracks on a frequent basis in order to monitor study conditions, and students who violate ESP conditions receive varying degrees of punishment, depending on the severity of the violation. The intent of ESP is to create an environment conducive to studying so that students will use their time wisely because, as they quickly learn, there are indeed only twenty-four hours in a day, and they must set aside at least six of those hours for sleep. Cadet Candidates also have time available for academics between the end of ESP and lights out at 2300, although that time is sometimes taken up by chain of command meetings, cleaning the barracks, or getting ready for major inspections.

Classroom I. Classes at USMAPS are focused, engaging affairs. There are normally only fourteen to seventeen students in a class, and hardly any class has more than nineteen students. Classes are held in relatively small classrooms, approximately twenty-eight feet by twenty-two feet in dimension, so students literally have no place to "hide" during class. Each student has a desk and a chair, and students are expected to come to class every day with the required textbooks, class notebook, and laptop, if appropriate. Each class has a section marcher, a student who is responsible for taking accountability during each class, calling the class to attention at the beginning of the class period, reporting the accountability status to the instructor, and then calling the class to attention at the end of each period.

Instructors at USMAPS use a variety of pedagogical techniques during class. Some instructors tend to lecture quite a bit, while others tend to have their students at the boards, writing responses to various questions posed by the instructor. USMAPS instructors also frequently use small-group work, and, regardless of the exact pedagogical techniques employed, all students are expected to be alert and engaged during class. To that end, there are a number of classroom decorum rules in place at USMAPS, including—most importantly—no cell phone use during class and no eating in class.

Students may bring beverages to class, but they must be in spill-proof containers, in order to protect laptops in case of spillage and to keep the classroom clean.

In addition to classroom deportment policies, USMAPS has a very strict policy regarding the timeliness of submissions. As page two of the Academics Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) states, "Any graded assignment submitted after the due day and time specified by the instructor is late and will receive a reduction of one full letter grade for each twenty-four hour period it is late thereafter; the clock for these periods begins the minute the assignment was due." In most classrooms, graded assignments are due at the time the section marcher calls the class to attention at the beginning of the class period during which the assignment was due, and students are told to have their papers and other assignments sitting on the section marcher's desk prior to that time. Students are also warned not to plan on printing assignments the morning they are due and not to wait until getting to class to put assignments into their proper submission folders. In the military, people's lives depend on timely actions and planning ahead, and that kind of attention to detail and concern about meeting suspense dates and times are integral parts of the academic experience at USMAPS and USMA.

Faculty. The final topic of the general academic program at USMAPS this chapter will address is the faculty. USMAPS is a small institution. It has approximately two-hundred forty students—its new barracks was designed to hold up to two-hundred forty six students—and a staff and faculty of between eighty and ninety. The staff includes all of the military leadership, such as the Commandant, Operations Officer, and Company Tactical Officers, as well as the coaches, dining facility workers, custodial workers, and administrative assistants. The faculty itself is quite small: twenty-six. All faculty members are government service (GS) employees ranging from GS 11 to GS 14. USMAPS is headed by a Dean, the only GS 14 on the faculty. The current Dean assumed her duties at USMAPS in the spring of 2013, and she was the first Dean USMAPS had had in nineteen years. When USMAPS began getting former USMA Academy Professors

as Commandants, a trend that began in the late nineties, the rationale was that it did not need a Dean because of the academic background of the Commandant, who was essentially dual-hatted as the operational and academic leader. However, time showed that having a Dean was beneficial for the institution, so the policy of having a USMAPS Dean was put back into place in the spring of 2013, and the current Dean has indeed greatly benefitted USMAPS through her diligence, thoughtfulness, and outside-the-box thinking that has led to important changes in the daily schedule, an increased emphasis on faculty development, and the nature of the Student Development Course, among a number of other important improvements.

The Dean oversees four Departments: Math, English, Science, and the Center for Enhanced Performance (CEP), which teaches the previously discussed Student Development Course. The Math Department has nine faculty, the English Department has eight, and the Science Department and CEP have four apiece. The Math and English Departments are larger than Science and CEP because students attend math and English every day but science and SDC every other day. Additionally, the Math Department has one more instructor than does the English Department because math is divided into three sub-courses throughout the year, whereas English does not group its students until the second semester, and one of the math sub-courses is Algebra and Trigonometry, which is best taught with exceptionally small sections of approximately eight to twelve students.

The Math, English, and CEP Departments are headed by a GS 13 Director, while the Science Department is currently headed by a GS 12 but will hopefully soon be led by a GS 13. The Science Department has three GS 11 instructors, in addition to its Director, and the CEP Department has two GS 11 instructors and one GS 12 Senior Instructor. The Math and English Departments have three Senior GS 12 instructors apiece in combination with four and three, respectively, GS 11 instructors. The GS system ranges from GS 1 to GS 15, so all instructors are relatively high on the GS scale, and the Dean holds the second highest GS rank possible. USMAPS instructors have excellent health

and retirement benefits as well as receiving an average of four weeks of paid leave per year. GS employees also receive an adjustment to their pay based on the cost of living in the area of their employment, so USMAPS GS employees are among the highest paid GS employees in the federal workforce because of the high cost of living in the West Point area. Salaries of GS 11s average approximately $75,000 to $80,000 per year; GS 12s average in the $85,000 to $90,000 range; GS 13s earn approximately $95,000 to $100,000; and GS 14s earn in the $110,000 to $115,000 range, salaries which are comparable to public school teachers of similar experience, education, and responsibilities in the vicinity of West Point.

The faculty at USMAPS is quite diverse with respect to geographical background, education level and institution, age, gender, and experience but not race, an element of diversity addressed in the following paragraph. Instructors at USMAPS grew up and were educated in places across the nation; instructors are from as far north as Minnesota, as far west as California, as far south as Florida, and as far east as New York. Faculty members began their undergraduate educations in places as diverse as a local community college to the United States Military Academy, and their graduate degrees, while understandably concentrated in education, range from an M.A. in theology to a Ph.D. in chemical engineering. With respect to their teaching experience, several faculty members taught at a middle school or high school prior to coming to USMAPS, and several other faculty members have taught only at the undergraduate level. The faculty at USMAPS tends to be relatively stable in terms of turnover, but this past year was an unusually tumultuous one in that regard: currently, there are four first-year instructors on faculty, in addition to the entire science faculty, who have been at USMAPS for barely more than one year.

Of the twenty-six faculty members, twelve are female and fourteen are male, and the great majority are Caucasian. Currently, the faculty has one African American (male), one Asian-American (male), and one Hispanic (female). This ethnic and racial composition is a cause for concern, especially given the very diverse student body taught

by the USMAPS faculty, and the Dean and Directors are well aware that future hiring actions need to be grounded in a much stronger effort to reach out to minority candidates—especially African Americans, given the high percentage of African American students at USMAPS—in an effort to publicize the wonderful opportunities available at USMAPS to audiences who might not be aware of these opportunities. Another bright spot in USMAPS faculty diversity, however, is the personalities and teaching styles of that faculty. Cadet Candidates will interact with a wide range of personalities as West Point cadets and especially as Army officers, and the faculty teaching them at USMAPS certainly affords them exposure to a great variety of personalities and teaching styles. These personalities and teaching styles run the gamut from quiet to effusive, serious to humorous, hands-off to hands-on, and stern to warm, but regardless of the personality type and teaching style, the members of the faculty at USMAPS take their jobs seriously and are passionate about their profession. USMAPS faculty know that while they work hard at teaching, grading, conferencing, and being involved with their students beyond academics, they are fortunate to teach at a wonderfully resourced institution populated with motivated, respectful, bright students who are preparing themselves to take their places in a world-renowned institution.

***USMA & USMAPS English*.** Because the essence of this research project is the extent to which the USMAPS English program has prepared its students for the USMA English program, the most important context to have is that of these two programs. Additionally, because this research project focuses on the preparation provided for USMA English by USMAPS English, the context of the latter program is much more important than that of the former because ultimately the USMAPS English program is the program being explored for its impact on students, not the USMA English program for its impact on cadets. However, the context of the USMA English program is nonetheless important, and I will begin with it in order to establish for the audience the context of the driving purpose of USMAPS English: USMA English. Finally, while the USMA English

program as a whole is important with respect to the context of the USMAPS English program, the first course of the former program—EN 101—is by far the most important part of that program with respect to USMAPS English because it is the course with clearly the closest connection to Cadet Candidates, and it is therefore the course upon which subsequent paragraphs will focus.

As stated earlier in this dissertation, for more than three decades, all cadets have had to take four semesters of English: freshman composition, freshman literature, sophomore philosophy, and junior advanced composition. As of this year, the advanced composition course has been dropped from the core course requirement, but the freshman and sophomore requirements remain. Of those requirements, the freshman composition course is the English course that USMAPS graduates must take immediately after completing USMAPS English and is therefore the one with the closest link to what they learned at the Prep School.

EN 101 is an English course but one with a clear focus on argumentative essays written in response to non-fiction argumentative essays; as such, it is very much a composition course. EN 101, like most courses, is in a constant state of evaluation and subsequent revision in order to be the best possible course and one that is abreast of the latest pedagogical and compositional theories. Below is an excerpt from the EN 101 portion of the USMA Academics website. This excerpt contains the course overview, objectives, requirements, and texts and is from Academic Year 2013-2014; another update of the course will be forthcoming within the next year.

> Overview: The goal of EN101 Composition is to significantly contribute to the accomplishment of the following statement taken from the Communication Goal chapter in *Educating Future Army Officers for a Changing World (EFAOFACW):*
>
> "By the end of their first year, cadets meet a college-level standard of basic proficiency in argumentative writing and establish their competence as writers ready to develop their skills in future undergraduate assignments."

The specific EN101 course objectives are as follows:

1. Instruct cadets in the four elements of effective communication listed in *EFAOFACW*, Section II, Communication: Substance, Organization, Style, and Correctness.
2. Help cadets to become better academic writers by emphasizing effective use of a writing process and the responsible use of sources in the preparation of argumentative essays.
3. Improve cadet ability to read and think critically by exposing them to a variety of important and interesting essays that investigate profound and enduring themes and issues.
4. Develop cadet awareness of the rhetorical dimensions of different writing projects and the need to employ appropriate conventions for each.

Course Requirements

1. Three Homework Essays, ranging from 4-6 pages. Each essay requires cadets to respond critically to readings in the course anthology. One essay entails research in the Jefferson Library.
2. An annotated bibliography in support of the research essay.
3. A number of minor assignments designed to facilitate successful execution of the Homework Essays.
4. A variety of other assignments that expose cadets to writing standards in other academic disciplines and allow them to experiment with other modes of presentation (technical reports, Web writing, oral presentations, presentation visuals and supplements, etc.).
5. A Term End Examination that tests cadets' ability to write an essay unassisted by tutors, mentors, and other sources of help.

Course Texts

1. *The New Humanities Reader*, 4th edition. Eds. Richard E. Miller and Kurt Spellmeyer.
2. *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, 2nd edition. Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein.
3. *The Little, Brown Handbook*, 12th edition.

The excerpt above clearly illuminates the compositional nature of EN 101 and shows that this freshman composition course requires its students to write a number of out-of-class argumentative essays, one of which is supported by an annotated bibliography. Additionally, cadets also must present their thoughts via media other than standard essays, and these media include technical and Web writing in addition to oral presentations that include audiovisual materials. Moreover, students gain exposure to

writing in other academic subjects, in an attempt to incorporate "writing across the disciplines" into EN 101. What this excerpt does not clearly indicate is that cadets must also write a number of timed in-class argumentative essays and that the most important—in terms of its impact on a student's course grade, normally approximately thirty-five percent—writing a cadet does during this course is the Term End (Final) Examination (TEE).

The EN 101 TEE is a three-and-one-half hour in-class essay that is based upon a reading that students receive ahead of the examination in addition to a reading they receive at the beginning of the examination. During the period of the examination, students must respond to a prompt that requires them to develop their own argument about a topic. In their response, students must use the readings provided to them as the basis of their argument, and they are expected to compose an essay of approximately three to five pages in length that is competent in the four key areas of substance, style, organization, and correctness. Last year's Term End Examination topic was the role of intercollegiate sports in America, and the examination cadets received contained the following background and prompt:

> Background: *Writing Today* states that an argument "involves making reasonable claims and then backing up those claims with evidence and support.... [Y]our primary goal is to persuade others that you are probably right" (329). Arguments and arguable claims "generally arise from four different sources: issues of definition, causation, evaluation, and recommendation" (331).
>
> Prompt: Articulate and support a well-defined argument concerning the effect of college athletics on the culture of colleges and universities. Ensure you read the articles closely, incorporate one or more to support your argument, and parenthetically cite your work appropriately. Your argument should be specific, clear, and address counterarguments.

As is evident, composing a well-written response to the above prompt in less than four hours is a challenging task, and EN 101 is focused on preparing students to meet that challenge. Students certainly do a great deal of out-of-class writing, on which they can

receive assistance and devote a significant amount of time to their writing, but they must also demonstrate the capability to compose a well-written argument without receiving any assistance during that process and under the pressure of time. Most professionals, and certainly most Army officers, must do both kinds of writing—assisted, longer duration writing and unassisted, short-suspense writing—and EN 101 requires its students to demonstrate both abilities. Additionally, of those cadets who fail EN 101, almost all of them fail the TEE—in fact, of the eight USMAPS graduates who failed EN 101 last fall, every one of them failed the TEE—so being able to write under the pressure of time is clearly an essential aspect of passing this composition course.

Now that the "parent" course of the USMAPS English program has been put into perspective, it is time to move to a thorough examination of that program, the cornerstone of this research project. Because the mission of USMAPS is to prepare its students for USMA, it follows that the mission of the Academics Department at USMAPS is to prepare Cadet Candidates for academics at USMA and that the mission of each academic course within the Academics Department is to prepare students for that respective discipline within the USMA curriculum. The forthcoming discussion about the USMAPS English program will address the mission of that program, in addition to a host of other topics that will provide a thorough overview of how USMAPS English prepares its students for USMA English. Those topics are the linkage that exists between EN 101 and USMAPS English; the two pillars and three additional objectives of USMAPS English; the three tracks within English and details of each track; assessments; the writing process; life in the English classroom; and the faculty. By the end of this examination of the USMAPS English program, the reader will hopefully feel as if he or she has been "into the USMAPS English classroom" and thereby have a thorough understanding of what it is like to be a USMAPS English student who is preparing himself or herself for the USMA English program. Most importantly, the reader will know the details behind the

efforts to prepare USMAPS students for USMA English and will thus be in a thoroughly grounded position to understand the extent to which those efforts have succeeded.

Straight from the USMAPS Academics Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), the USMAPS Department of English mission is "…to prepare Cadet Candidates to succeed in the Department of English and Philosophy [DEP] at USMA." This mission shows the inextricable linkage between these two departments, and, unsurprisingly, the USMAPS English Department has made consistent efforts for many years to maintain a close connection with its parent department. When USMAPS was located at Ft. Monmouth—1974 to 2011—those efforts consisted largely of an annual trip by the USMAPS English faculty to the USMA English Department. This trip normally lasted two days and included meetings, briefings, and attendance in EN 101 or EN 102 classes by USMAPS English faculty. Conversely, the DEP leadership would occasionally visit Ft. Monmouth to observe USMAPS English classes and to interact with USMAPS English faculty. These visits provided annual opportunities for each department to remain in close touch with each other and to discuss important topics in person.

Despite the efforts mentioned above, though, as well as the important learning and progress that were clearly taking place in the USMAPS English program, the DEP and USMAPS English programs were not as closely aligned as one might believe. There are a variety of possible reasons for this lack of alignment—among them the natural, understandable desire of the USMAPS English program to be autonomous, conjoined with the just as understandable desire on the part of DEP to not impose its program on its USMAPS English counterpart; the physical distance between the two departments and commensurate difficulties in coordination, particularly before the advent of the Internet and email; innate human tendencies toward inertia and leaving well enough alone; and, perhaps most importantly and as will be seen in Chapter Five, the success that USMAPS English students had in USMA English and the belief that students at USMAPS needed to focus on certain fundamentals prior to moving to the undergraduate level—but the

move of USMAPS to USMA in the summer of 2011 was an obvious time to begin a comprehensive examination of the USMAPS English program and its connectivity to its parent department.

***USMAPS English Curriculum*.** For many, many years, the focus of the USMAPS academic curriculum was twofold: SAT preparation along with English and math fundamentals. In fact, during the 1960s, '70s, '80s, '90s, and much of the '00s, the entire first semester of instruction at USMAPS focused almost exclusively on SAT preparation, including taking practice SATs on a monthly basis (Krug, Metz). While records of USMAPS and USMA SAT scores in the 60's timeframe do not exist, there is much anecdotal evidence that the rigorous SAT preparation then in vogue did indeed greatly improve the SAT scores of many Cadet Candidates. However, many of the faculty—both at USMAPS and USMA— involved in the curriculum at that time wondered what was being lost as a result of the heavy emphasis on SAT preparation, and in the early '00s, the English curriculum shifted its emphasis from SAT preparation to preparing Cadet Candidates by focusing on grammar in the first semester and critical reading and writing in the second semester. Within the English curriculum, that shift included retaining a small degree of SAT preparation, but that degree was much less than had been the case. Ultimately, the rationale behind this shift was that so much emphasis on SAT instruction was displacing many kinds of other instruction that could be occurring, and the thought was that this other instruction would inherently prepare students for the SAT by virtue of the nature of that instruction (Krug).

This revised curriculum was the one in place when I began teaching at USMAPS, in September 2010. It basically divided the school year into two parts and focused on grammar and sentence & paragraph basics during the first two quarters—August to December—and on critical reading and argumentative essay writing during the third and fourth quarters—January to May. During the first two quarters, students focused on learning, in great depth, about a wide range of grammar topics. The first quarters' syllabi

from Academic Year 2010-2011 include grammar topics such as subjects and predicates; parts of speech; sentence patterns; sentence types; comma splices; sentence fragments; fused sentences; agreement, both pronoun-antecedent and subject-verb; pronoun case; verbs, including all twelve verb tenses; verbals, including gerunds, participles, and infinitives; commas; and parallelism, etc. This kind of emphasis of course provided students with a through acquaintance with key aspects of grammar but came at the exclusion of other, arguably more important topics, as will be highlighted soon. Indeed, as Patrick Hartwell examines in his seminal essay on grammar—"Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar"—that I address in this study's literature review, such an intense emphasis on grammar is controversial and has been largely found to be counterproductive. This portion of the curriculum also included writing, and that writing focused on sentence exercises and learning how to write summaries, narratives, and expository essays. In the first quarter, for example, the writing portion of students' grades largely stemmed from a series of summaries and in-class paragraphs they had to compose, while the second quarter required students to write a narrative about an important event in their lives and an expository essay in the form of an extended definition of a term of their choosing. Finally, the first two quarters included a number of reading assignments, most of which were narrative and expository in nature.

The third and fourth quarters of the curriculum emphasized critical reasoning in the guise of learning how to recognize logical fallacies, reading poetry and a novel and/or play, and writing several argumentative essays about the aforementioned readings. These essays included both out-of-class and in-class writing, and students also had to re-write their candidate statements for admission to USMA as well as write a few in-class essays during the first part of the third quarter in preparation for the SAT in late January. On a related note, the reason for addressing poetry in this part of the curriculum, even though EN 101 does not cover poetry, is that EN 102 addresses poetry in great detail, and cadets take this course during the second semester of their Plebe year, so USMAPS wanted to

ensure that its students had had at least a few weeks' exposure to poetry at a level more sophisticated than what most students had experienced in high school, if they had experienced it at all.

As stated earlier, USMAPS' move from Ft. Monmouth, NJ to West Point in the summer of 2011 was a natural time to closely examine the English curriculum and take advantage of being only three miles from the USMA English Department. While the curriculum discussed in the previous two pages undoubtedly enabled Cadet Candidates to greatly improve many aspects of their English skills, upon closer examination it had several significant shortcomings that needed attention. The curriculum received that attention, and the result is a much different curriculum that has demonstrably improved the performance of USMAPS students in EN 101.

The foundation of all four English courses, and indeed of every humanities course at West Point, consists of two components: critical reading skills and the ability to write argumentative essays. Those two categories are obviously quite broad, but they just as obviously lie at the heart of West Point humanities courses, whether they be English, political science, law, psychology, international relations, or all other such courses. Educators of all sorts—teachers, researchers, administrators, et al—have debated for years and will almost certainly continue debating for years to come what kinds of reading and writing are most appropriate for different levels and kinds of schools and different kinds of students. This discussion is an extraordinarily important one but one that has never had nor will ever have a universally agreed upon answer because reading and writing are so varied and always will be.

However, at West Point, the fundamental answers to the issue of what kinds of reading and writing are most important for its students was resolved long ago and without much debate, based on relevant documents I have read or heard discussed. The reason for this lack of debate almost certainly stems from the reason for West Point's existence: to produce leaders of character who will be commissioned as Army officers. Ultimately,

those officers will not be required to delve into fiction or to write personal narratives about their life experiences. Doing these kinds of things is certainly important and is in fact addressed by various elective courses at USMA, but, fundamentally, officers must be able to read complex, non-fiction documents and quickly ascertain the main and key supporting points of those documents and then write explanatory or persuasive responses to those documents, as well as write documents staking out various positions and explaining why those positions have merit. Thus, the great majority of humanities courses at West Point focus on developing students' ability to carefully read and comprehend a wide range of non-fiction texts and write expository and argumentative essays about those texts. Additionally, students must be able to write research-based position papers on a wide variety of topics, and those papers must demonstrate the author's ability to summarize, analyze, and evaluate sources and develop positions based on his or her reading and writing abilities.

This discussion certainly does not suggest that West Point faculty are not passionate about their discipline or of many minds with respect to how to develop cadets' ability to read critically and write argumentatively. I have been involved in a wide variety of impassioned discussions about these topics, in a variety of forums ranging from informal discussions in individual offices to formal committee hearings based on months of research and debate, and I know that these kinds of conversations occur at West Point on a daily basis. However, the emphasis upon close, careful reading of non-fiction texts and expository or persuasive writing done in response to those texts underlay all of those discussions because at the heart of those discussions was always the acknowledgement of the mission of West Point and what kinds of reading and writing officers have always primarily done and will continue to do for the foreseeable future.

On a level directly relevant to my research project, these two categories—critical reading and argumentative writing—form the core of EN 101, as evidenced by the previously discussed course goals and TEE background and prompt. After having taught

the USMAPS English curriculum for almost two years in the spring of 2012, I wrote a lengthy memorandum (Appendix A) focused on recommended changes to that curriculum. This memorandum was based on my experience with the USMAPS English curriculum and on many conversations I had had with colleagues and students. This document was approved by the then Director of the USMAPS English Department and also approved by the then Head of the USMA Department of English and Philosophy. The recommended changes were centered on improving the curriculum's ability to enable students to improve their critical reading and argumentative essay writing abilities, and these changes have been incorporated into the English curriculum over the past three summers, beginning in the summer of 2012.

The gist of the findings of the examination of the English curriculum was that it contained not nearly enough reading of sophisticated, non-fiction texts; it did not require its students to write nearly enough argumentative essays; it focused too heavily on some aspects of grammar but not enough on others; it provided its students with no required conferences with their instructors; it did not afford its students the opportunity to display what they had learned about argumentative writing in the form of an examination similar to the EN 101 TEE; and it did not require its students to do enough formal public speaking, a skill vitally important to cadets and then officers. The foundation of the USMAPS English course, again as stated in the USMAPS Academics SOP, is critical reading and argumentative writing, supplemented by maximizing standardized test scores, documenting properly, and speaking comfortably and professionally in public. The revised English curriculum addresses all five of these goals in great depth, and the next several paragraphs highlight how the curriculum does just that.

Before moving to a discussion of how the current USMAPS English curriculum came to have its current shape, though, I must acknowledge a glaring omission from the March 2012 document that served as the genesis of the points above and the resultant thousands of hours of English faculty efforts to best re-shape that curriculum: developing

a culturally responsive English curriculum founded upon an explicit acknowledgement of the very diverse student body that curriculum was serving. A great deal has been written about culturally responsive curricula by a host of authors, perhaps most notably Gloria Ladson-Billings. In works such as *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* and "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," Ladson-Billings contends that all students—not just minority students—learn most effectively when they have teachers who genuinely care for them, believe that they can succeed and foster that belief in their students, and use a curriculum that is culturally relevant to them. The term "culturally relevant" can mean many things, but Ladson-Billings focuses on "cultural referents," things that are closely related to the student's culture and that are therefore more likely to have meaning to students.

In the case of the USMAPS English curriculum, these cultural referents would take the form of the texts that students read and, to a lesser degree, the movies they see in class, and those texts and movies should, according to Ladson-Billings, be ones that are relevant to them based on factors such as the ethnicity or race of the author and/or characters, the topics that are addressed, and the ways in which those topics are dealt with in the texts. Ultimately, and as psychological studies have repeatedly shown—not to mention my personal experience in the classroom—students relate best to and are most responsive to reading and writing about topics that are closely linked to their lived experiences written about by authors who possess racial, ethnic, historical, and other characteristics closely linked to those of their readers. This kind of culturally relevant pedagogy and curricula makes perfect sense because of fundamental human nature: most people simply are most interested in reading about and watching people, places, things, and experiences that are familiar to them and that have played prominent roles in their lives, and, as USMAPS English faculty, it is our responsibility to acknowledge, react to, and leverage culturally relevant texts to best engage our students.

This is not to say that "dead white male European" authors have no place in the USMAPS English curriculum. Authors having these characteristics have clearly produced countless numbers of works of great value, and exposing students of color to texts written by these kinds of authors obviously exposes these students to a kind of diversity different from their own. However, most USMAPS students have already gained exposure to these authors prior to arriving at USMAPS because most K-12 curricula contain a wide variety of works from these authors but unfortunately do not contain even close to a similar number of texts by diverse authors. Thus, in a school that has a student body that is as diverse as that of USMAPS—a student body that contains a majority of minorities and that includes students almost half of whom are African American along with a sizeable number of Hispanics and Pacific Islanders—an obvious step in revising the curriculum for that student body should have been a series of in-depth discussions about how to make it more culturally responsive with response to the topics it requires students to address via reading and writing.

Two anecdotes will make it clear how such a re-focusing of the USMAPS English curriculum could very well strongly impact its students in a positive way. In my own classroom, for several years I have ended the school year with one of the highlights of the year: my students' and my reading of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. After having taught at USMAPS for a year, I realized that the English curriculum was completely lacking in texts written by or focusing upon people of color, and I wanted to at least begin the process of giving my students an exposure to texts related to that diversity via topic and author's background. I unfortunately did not know much about texts written by or about minorities, though, so I was quite limited in my choices. This lack of knowledge on my part is disturbing, especially given my position as the Director of the English Department at a school that has such a large number of minority students, and one of my most important goals is to address this deficiency on a personal and faculty level by becoming much more familiar with texts written by and about minorities. Fortunately, a

colleague recommended Achebe's text, and my students have been the beneficiaries ever since. Based on their reactions to the book, as encapsulated in our class discussions, the papers they have written about *Things Fall Apart*, and the comments about it they have made on their year-end course feedback, they have resoundingly enjoyed and benefitted from reading, discussing, and writing about this text. Moreover, they have made it clear via their comments and discussion that a large part of the reason they have enjoyed the book so much is because it was written by an African author and addresses topics such as cultural identity and power relationships that relate so closely to their personal experiences.

Additionally, the topic of a recent midterm was whether profiling Muslims—specifically, those who "appeared" to be Muslim because of their dress and/or ethnicity—was justified in the name of airport security. For this examination, students were given a read-ahead essay on this topic and then received an additional reading at the beginning of the two-hour examination period; they then had to write an argumentative essay developing their own position on this topic. Students received the read-ahead essay at the end of class the day prior to the examination, and their reaction was immediate, strong, and positive. Students in my class were animatedly discussing this topic on their way out of the classroom, despite not having been exposed to the reading for more than sixty seconds, and I heard from my colleagues that their students' reactions were similar. I also later heard that this topic was vigorously and excitedly discussed throughout the barracks that same evening. Most importantly, the essays I received the following day were—based on their length, depth, and voice—clearly the product of engaged students writing about something they felt strongly about because the topic—profiling segments of the population—was something they had experienced and/or had discussed at length, and the articles in question were written by minority authors to whom the students could closely relate, regardless of whether they shared the author's opinion on this topic.

These two experiences, along with Gloria Ladson-Billings' research on culturally relevant pedagogy that she articulates in her groundbreaking "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," highlight what should have been obvious during the 2012-2015 USMAPS English curriculum revision process: that process should have included a focus upon how to make that curriculum more culturally relevant to our very diverse student body. The bad news, so to speak, is that this topic was not addressed during that process, with the result that, for example, very few of the more than fifty readings students do during the academic year are by authors of color. The good news, however, is that this summer's curriculum revisions certainly will include an in-depth discussion of this topic, as will all future curriculum revisions, and those discussions will certainly lead to a curriculum that includes topics—such as ethnic profiling—that are especially relevant to USMAPS diverse student body, and those topics will be contained in texts many of which will be written by authors of color. It is now time to turn back to the curriculum revision process that did occur, but with the acknowledgement that that process, while robust and undertaken with the best of intentions, did suffer from a serious, unfortunate oversight—but one that will be addressed beginning this summer. It really is inexcusable that this oversight occurred, but the fact that it did occur has caused me to consider why it occurred. In my own case, I became so caught up in the process of addressing the hundreds of points mentioned earlier—things ranging from re-structuring the fundamental focus of the curriculum to details such as developing and refining particular reading quizzes—that I just "missed" this obvious point. However, I also believe that my being a white male and the lack of diversity in our faculty certainly created the conditions for this kind of oversight, an oversight that we need to recognize and ensure we do not repeat.

The USMAPS English curriculum began taking its current form in the summer of 2012 via a series of English faculty meetings to first assess the strengths and weaknesses of the extant curriculum and then make changes to reinforce the strengths and ameliorate

the weaknesses. This process has taken place the past three summers and has involved thousands of hours of faculty time, and the consensus of the faculty is that the curriculum is essentially where it needs to be for the foreseeable future—with the notable exception of being as culturally responsive as it needs to be, a gap that will be addressed in the upcoming summer's curriculum revision discussions. The centerpiece of this curriculum is its reading and writing assignments in conjunction with its assessments of reading, writing, speaking, and grammar. The current curriculum requires students to begin reading stimulating, challenging essays in week one of the course—Mortimer Adler's "How to Mark a Book" is the first such essay, given that one of the course's main goals is also to teach students how to study well and that annotating texts is a key aspect of that goal—and has them continue that reading over the entire academic year. By the end of the year, students have had more than fifty reading assignments ranging from short essays such as the Adler essay and others of that nature such as Peter Elbow's "Freewriting," Lewis Thomas's "Notes on Punctuation," Kurt Vonnegut's "How to Write with Style," and Frederick Douglass's How I Learned to Read and Write"; to longer, more difficult essays such as Nicholas Carr's "Is Google Making Us Stupid?," George Packer's "The Broken Contract: Inequality and America's Decline," Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave," George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language," and Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The American Scholar"; to history essays such as Gordon Woods's "Democracy and the Constitution" and Charles Dew and Gary Gallagher's "Was the Civil War Fought Over Slavery?" Additionally, students read approximately ten poems, the same number of short stories, a long play, and a novel, all during the fourth quarter. Finally, because the English faculty knows that students are very busy and by virtue of human nature will devote their attention to requirements directly impacting their grades, almost every reading has an attached quiz designed to reward those students who made the time to do and annotate the reading and penalize those who did not. This amount and type of reading may seem overwhelming, but it is achievable by virtue of the fact that

students have more than one hundred thirty, seventy-five minute lessons of English by the end of the course, an aspect of the course that the English faculty greatly appreciates.

The curriculum also requires students to write a great deal. Students write nine out-of-class essays—three during Quarter One and two during Quarters Two, Three, and Four, respectively—and four in-class essays—one per quarter—for a total of twelve major writing assignments. The writing assignments begin with a short narrative and then move to an expository essay, but by the end of the first quarter, students have already moved into the realm of argumentative writing by virtue of the analysis essay they write, a three-four page essay that analyzes one of the previously mentioned essays by identifying its thesis and main supporting points and then explaining what techniques the author uses to develop the argument in question. Students then transition to writing evaluations of arguments and then, ultimately, to writing arguments that express their own positions on various topics, whether fiction or non-fiction.

Two crucially important aspects of the revised curriculum were the inclusion of a pre- and post- writing assessment and the development of a highly structured, very methodical writing process. As stated previously, during the week before classes begin, Reorgy Week, students take a number of math, science, and English placement and assessment examinations. The grammar examination and reading comprehension examination are important components of the English portion of that testing, but the most important component is the Basic Writing Skills Examination (BWSE). This examination is a two-hour, in-class argumentative essay very similar to the three-hour Term End Examination students will take at the end of the third quarter. The TEE is designed to closely reflect the EN 101 TEE so that students undergo the challenging experience of composing a well-written argumentative essay based on high-level readings and written under the pressure of time; as such, the TEE is arguably the most important writing students do in USMAPS English. The reason it is given at the end of the third, instead of the fourth, quarter is that it serves as an integral part of the USMA English Department's

evaluation of Cadet Candidates' reading, and especially writing, abilities as part of the application process to USMA. The prompt for this year's BWSE is below, followed by the prompt for the TEE.

> **Background:** As you begin your studies at USMAPS, it is important for the faculty to determine the level at which you are currently writing, compared to the level you will need to demonstrate on your Term End Exam (TEE). Doing your best on BWSE will enable the faculty to make that determination with the most accuracy, and, even more importantly, will allow you to see where your writing stands with respect to where it needs to be.
>
> **Prompt:** Articulate and support a well-defined argument concerning genetic engineering and designer babies. Ensure you read the attached articles closely, incorporate one or more—including "Staying Human"—to support your argument, and cite your work appropriately. Your argument should be specific and clear and should address counterarguments.
>
> **Background:** Slavery, segregation, and racism are painful aspects of our national history. Debates have raged around topics such as the significance of the Confederate flag as a symbol and the memorialization of national figures connected to slavery, segregation, and racism. Recently, students across the nation have drawn attention to these types of controversial symbols or memorials on their campuses. For example, here at West Point we could debate the significance of or meaning associated with a barracks memorializing Robert E. Lee, an officer who served both for and against the United States.
>
> **Prompt:** In a thesis-driven, argumentative essay, consider the following: What value is there in either memorializing or erasing difficult elements of the past? Be sure to situate your argument using evidence from at least three of the four assigned readings. You may find it useful to center your argument on a specific example.

With respect to the aforementioned methodical nature of the writing program as a whole, students at USMAPS follow a step-by-step process for all of their formal writing assignments. Each assignment begins with a close reading of the prompt so that students clearly understand the intent and parameters of the assignment. Students then do some sort of pre-writing, normally in the form of a paragraph that describes how they plan to respond to the assignment; they then submit that paragraph to their instructors so that the instructors can ensure they are on the right path. The next step in this process is the

development of an outline, an especially important part of the process of writing an argumentative essay. While a tremendous amount has been published about the writing process and the appropriate role, if any, of what is traditionally called "pre-writing" and, of course, what types of pre-writing might be most or least effective, the English faculty has found again and again that those students who prepared or had to prepare outlines were normally far ahead of their counterparts who did not, so part of the curriculum revision process was to standardize that requirement across all students and instructors.

These outlines are designed to help students learn the rhythm that most argumentative essays follow, whatever the discipline or publication may be; indeed, as students move through the various assigned readings or texts that they find through research, instructors will frequently highlight that rhythm: a clear beginning, middle, and end; a strong thesis, most often placed at the beginning but sometimes at the end of the essay; and a series of supporting paragraphs that normally begin with topic sentences which are related to the thesis and developed by evidence of the topic sentence's assertion and subsequent analysis of that evidence. Pointing out this rhythm that occurs in so much argumentative writing both highlights this pattern for students so that they will be aware of a key part of the text they might otherwise have not noticed and lends credibility to the faculty's requirement for outlines by showing that all sorts of writers and writings use this structured format, not just their USMAPS English teacher. Thus, the use of outlines in USMAPS English is more of a heuristic than an algorithm in the sense that the outline is just that: an "outline" that provides a framework, albeit a detailed one, but certainly not an algorithm that tells the student not only how to generally organize the essay but also how each piece of it is going to fit for every assignment. Therefore, for example, if a student wants to place her thesis at the end of her argumentative essay, or even use an implied thesis, she may certainly do that, but she should also indicate via her outline that her decision was a conscious one that she made for a desired effect. Additionally, if, for example, a student desires to begin the body of

his argumentative essay with a summary of key concepts and/or texts relating to his argument, he may use that technique, but he does not have to include such a summary; in either case, though, his outline should indicate his thought process regarding this part of his essay. After submitting and getting feedback on their outlines, students prepare their rough drafts and have an individual conference with their instructors. These conferences are quite time and energy intensive on the part of instructors but have proven to be invaluable and have merited consistently high praise from students on course-end feedback vehicles.

Cadet Candidates follow their conferences by writing their final drafts, which they submit in a folder affectionately called a "Brown Bomber" and which contains the prior elements of the writing process—the outline and draft with instructor comments—so that instructors can see how well students responded to the feedback they had received. Once they receive their graded essays back from their instructors, students are still not complete with the assignment because they must take two more steps: correct, in bold print, all errors the instructor noted in addition to composing a three to four sentence reflection on the writing of the essay in question and then, finally, insert all elements of the assignment into their Writing Portfolio, a large three-ring binder that students receive at the beginning of the school year and that they must submit for a grade at the end of the school year. This binder will ultimately contain all of the in-class and out-of-class writing students do for the school year and as such is an invaluable resource for EN 101 and subsequent courses that require writing, given the close connection between the type of writing done at USMAPS and USMA.

This past year, the USMAPS English Department began a program of coordinating with the relevant organizations at USMA to link the former year's Prepsters with their Writing Portfolios, and when that linkage did not occur quite as early in the semester as had been hoped, I received several unprompted emails from former students tactfully asking me when they were going to receive their Writing Portfolios because they felt that

having them would greatly assist them in writing their EN 101 essays. Moreover, one of my former students sent me the following unsolicited email upon receiving his Writing Portfolio: "Sir, I just want to say thank you very much for sending down all of our portfolio's. It's perfect timing too! Our first HWE1 is due next week. I feel very prepared for it--I keep thinking back to the first essay I wrote in your class last year ... how much red was marked on the paper. As annoyed as I was at the time I now see how necessary that was. So on behalf of all the vanguards, Thank you Sir!" I thanked the student in question for his kind email, wished him luck on his first undergraduate English essay, told him that I hoped that his USMAPS Writing Portfolio would indeed help him, and then gently pointed out that "portfolio's" should not have an apostrophe and that he needed commas in several places in his email.

The USMAPS English program had for many years been divided into three tracks—Standard, Honors, and Review—and the latest curriculum retained those divisions. There has been and probably always will be much debate about the merit of grouping students by ability. As this study's literature review points out, John Dixon, among many detractors of ability groupings, claims in his *Growth Through English* that students perform best when grouped together regardless of ability because not only do the stronger students help the weaker students by virtue of their comments during class discussions and their input during group work, but the weaker students also foster the development of the stronger students by exposing them to alternate ways of considering topics and to the many challenges that weaker students often face. While certainly cognizant of these kinds of concerns related to ability groupings, the English faculty decided during its deliberations about this topic to continue grouping its students by ability but to modify the manner in which that process occurred as well as to incorporate important substantive change into the Review group.

With respect to the timing of the grouping, for many years students had all begun English in the Standard program and then been divided into Honors and Review sections

at the end of the first quarter, with the majority of students remaining in the Standard program. Those students who had demonstrated strong skills and the potential to succeed in a more rigorous program were placed into one section of Honors English—approximately fifteen to twenty students in total—while those students who had struggled in the first quarter were placed into the Review sections, which normally contained roughly twenty to twenty-five students. The fundamental criteria for making these sectioning decisions were students' performance on first quarter assessments, their behavior and demeanor in the classroom, and, ultimately, the judgment of the instructors who had taught the students in question with respect to whether certain students needed to face more of a challenge than the Standard course would provide or whether certain other students needed the slower pace and increased emphasis on fundamentals that the Review sections would afford them. The Honors section presented its students with the aforementioned challenge by assigning them readings and writing assignments that were more difficult than those in the Standard course, and the Review section fostered its students' success by focusing on fewer, more fundamental topics and covering those topics in a more methodical manner than was the case in the Standard course. Underlying this topic of whether to group students is the fact that students who matriculate at USMAPS exhibit a wide range of verbal abilities and experiences, as well as accomplishments, in high school English and humanities courses, as evidenced by their standardized test scores and high school transcripts. USMAPS receives students who score above 700 on their verbal SAT and who take AP English but also students who score under 300 on the verbal SAT and who have never written a single argumentative essay, so the starting point for the English abilities and experiences of Cadet Candidates varies tremendously, a fact with which the USMAPS English faculty must deal.

This kind of grouping had worked relatively well for the many years that it was in effect, based on how well these students responded to these groupings. The students in the Honors section were, for the most part, able to handle the increased rigor of that

program—rigor that manifested itself, generally speaking, in readings and essay assignments that were more difficult than those of the Standard Course—and many students reported on year-end feedback that they enjoyed the course and felt that it prepared them to excel in USMA English. Conversely, students in the Review sections benefited from the slower pace of those sections and the greater attention they received from their instructor, by virtue of that slower pace as well as the generally smaller size of those sections—normally ten to twelve students as opposed the fifteen to seventeen of Standard sections. Additionally, results at USMA have demonstrated that Honors students at USMAPS do perform at the top of the USMAPS cohort in EN 101, and Review students do pass EN 101 at a rate almost comparable to that of their Honors and Standard counterparts but with course grades that are almost always lower than those of their aforementioned counterparts (OEMA).

Despite the strengths described in the preceding paragraph, the grouping process for the USMAPS English program did raise concerns with almost all of the faculty, and the faculty used the overhaul of the English program that began in the summer of 2012 as a chance to address those concerns. These concerns were that one quarter might not be sufficient time to identify those students who needed additional challenges or extra assistance, removing the strongest students from the Standard sections so early in the year would considerably decrease the strong input they provided to those sections, and putting the weakest students into the Review sections so soon would preclude them from receiving the benefits of the more rigorous Standard curriculum and would group them very early with only other students who were also struggling. Clearly, these topics are in some ways simply the yin to the yang of the previously discussed concerns, but the faculty were concerned enough about them that they collectively decided to alter to a considerable extent the way they grouped students.

First, beginning in the fall of 2013, students were not moved into Honors or Review English until the third quarter, which commences in early January. This change

was instituted in an attempt to ensure that instructors had had enough time to determine which students needed the challenges of Honors English or the assistance of Review English, to allow the strongest students to serve as leavening within all of the sections for an additional quarter, and to enable those students who had had difficulty in the first quarter the opportunity to make the adjustment to the USMAPS English program and hopefully perform better in the second quarter. Second, two sections of Honors English were formed, as opposed to the previous one section, in an attempt to keep each section of Honors English to a relatively small size of approximately twelve students so that these sections would have more of a seminar-like atmosphere as well as to provide the opportunity to take Honors English to a few more students. Third, students in the Review section used the same curriculum as those in the Standard sections. Previously, Review students used their own curriculum, which focused intensively on grammar and sentence structure but which did not require Review students to read as much as Standard students did nor to write the kind of sophisticated argumentative essays required of the remainder of the student body.

After two years of these new grouping criteria, the results are decidedly positive. Instructors have enjoyed having their strongest students stay with them for the first two quarters—students generally stay with the same section and instructor for the first two quarters and then move to another section and instructor for the third and fourth quarters, in an effort to maintain stability and allow students and instructors to get to know one another well, on the one hand, but also to expose students to at least two instructors as well as to allow instructors to get to know other students, on the other hand—and those students still receive an entire semester of daily meetings of their Honors section. Additionally, approximately twenty-five students have been able to receive the benefits of being in Honors English and in two, smaller sections, and they have performed well despite their number being approximately twenty-five percent larger than in previous years. Moreover, students in Review English have demonstrated that they really do need

additional assistance, as a result of two quarters' worth of performance, but in the meantime they continued to benefit from the challenges of the Standard curriculum and the input of their colleagues who were doing well in English over the course of the first two quarters, not just the first quarter. These students also demonstrated that they could handle the demanding Standard curriculum that they continued to follow while in their Review sections and that required them to do a great number of challenging readings and write sophisticated argumentative essays, but they benefitted from being in smaller sections and thereby receiving more attention from their instructors, and their instructors benefitted by being able to adjust the pace of the class and the depth into which they went to cover the topics on the curriculum by virtue of having students who were all moving at relatively the same pace.

A final topic regarding the Honors and Standard-Review sections that merits discussion is the gender, ethnic, and racial composition of these sections. In an institution with such a diverse student body—generally speaking, approximately fifteen percent female, forty to fifty percent White, forty to fifty percent Black, and roughly ten to twenty percent Hispanic and Pacific Islander—the composition of the sections containing that institution's strongest and weakest students is of great interest. No data of this sort have been kept, an oversight that will be corrected beginning this year, but last year's and this year's Honors sections contained approximately fifteen percent females but were somewhat over-represented with White students—approximately two-thirds of students in a student body that is approximately forty percent White—while both years' Standard-Review sections contained no females but were somewhat over-represented with Black students—approximately two-thirds of students in a study body that is approximately fifty percent Black. As mentioned earlier, the English faculty recommend students for these sections based upon students' performance in Standard English during the first two semesters, and my hope is that making the USMAPS English curriculum more culturally relevant will have a positive effect with respect to helping students of

color become even more engaged in the curriculum and perform more strongly so that the composition of these two types of sections more closely reflects the composition of the overall student body.

Assessments. The curriculum that has been discussed in detail has its foundation in critical reading and argumentative writing but also in the assessments it uses to determine how well its students are grasping those concepts. The number and type of reading and writing assignments have already been discussed, as have the pre- and post- writing assessments used. However, the revised curriculum also uses pre- and post- assessments for grammar and reading comprehension, and it contains a number of other important assessments that bear discussion at this point. Before delving into the details of this part of assessments, though, a discussion of what, exactly, is meant by "grammar" is in order.

Grammar is a notoriously difficult word to define; many people mean many different things by this word. Additionally, grammar applies to the spoken as well as the written word, although many people tend to consciously apply it to only the latter category. Moreover, grammar has been a contentious topic because it also deals with issues of power, hierarchy, and access to opportunity. The United States is an enormous, populous, diverse country with many different dialects. While it is certainly the case that speaking in a different dialect—whether Cajun, Southern, African American, et al—does not negatively reflect, at all, the speaker's intelligence, it is also the case that, justifiably or not, certain contexts and environments require what is known as Standard English—what is sometimes colloquially known as "proper" English—for success. Specifically, the Army, and even more so the officer corps, expects officers to speak and write in accordance with the rules and conventions of Standard English, which is of course why the USMAPS English program devotes so much time and effort to helping its students develop their ability to speak and write Standard English.

With respect to the definition of grammar, some use this word to refer to the foundational systems and meta-systems subconsciously at work in any language, spoken

or written, and that give that language its structure; others mean the very complex, specific rules that govern exactly how various parts of any given language work together; still others mean basic kinds of conventions such as what are in the English language called agreement, voice, punctuation, fragments, etc. Patrick Hartwell, for example, in his seminal essay on this topic entitled "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar," divides grammar into no fewer than five categories. For USMAPS English, "grammar" is meant to refer to the third category listed above, "basic kinds of conventions." Specifically, when I discuss students learning grammar, I mean their learning the basic tools of the structure of the language that allow them to clearly convey their spoken or written meaning in Standard English. Undoubtedly, dialects of many sorts enable those who speak and read these dialects to clearly convey and understand meaning, but, as I discuss in the previous paragraph, USMAPS students are in training to be commissioned officers, and Standard English is the expected form of written and spoken communication in that community. The kind of grammar instruction provided at USMAPS focuses upon being generally knowledgeable about parts of speech; sentences and how to discern sentence boundaries; clauses and how to differentiate independent and dependent clauses; commas, especially commas after introductory elements and commas combined with coordinating conjunctions—the "FANBOYS" words of for, and, nor, but, yet, so; pronoun case; and semicolons. USMAPS grammar instruction focuses upon these particular topics because experience with USMAPS students has shown that most students can relatively easily correct most errors associated with these topics if they understand at the conscious level the few grammatical principles embodied by these topics of parts of speech, sentence boundaries, and clauses.

In addition to its contentious connection with issues of power and privilege, the teaching of grammar has been controversial for many, many years on a different level because advocates of teaching it believe that students must know fundamental conventions of mechanics and usage such as punctuation and agreement in order to be

able to write intelligible, clear sentences and paragraphs, but detractors believe that grammar instruction is useless because it addresses parts of writing that students best learn by simply writing and reading or, worse, that teaching grammar is harmful because it takes time away from addressing more important matters. Those against the teaching of grammar understandably contend that since, for example, children can communicate effectively in speech without formal grammar instruction, students do not need formal instruction in grammar. This discussion will be addressed at some length in this study's literature review, but suffice it to say that much research (Carr, Miedema, et al) has shown that while humans are naturally "wired" to speak, they are not naturally "wired" to read and write, and, as such, they must make much more of a conscious effort to master reading and writing than they do to master speaking. Moreover, USMAPS grammar instruction is predicated upon the faculty's experience with what they have seen work, and not work. Specifically, USMAPS faculty noted over a period of many years that students seemed to learn very little from all of the annotations and corrections made to their paper with respect to errors in voice, agreement, possession, and punctuation, etc. because students kept repeating the same kinds of mistakes on subsequent papers. Personally, I noted this same phenomenon when I began teaching English at West Point in 1992. In an effort to help remedy this problem, I began during my third year of teaching at USMA requiring my students to re-submit all essays after having corrected all of the aforementioned kinds of errors and highlighting those corrections in bold print so that students would pay attention to these particular problems as they were correcting their work and so that I would be able to quickly scan their re-submissions for their corrections.

When combined with focused classroom instruction—a key component of which was explaining to students that following rules of grammar was important not simply because of "rule following" but because grammar ultimately allows writers to clearly articulate their meaning—on the grammar topics mentioned above, this technique worked

wonders. While I did not conduct a test or experiment, per se, of this technique with my students, as a matter of practice, I did just that: my first-year and second-year students were my "pre" test students because they did not experience this kind of grammar instruction and required correction-making process, and my subsequent students were my "post" test students. With my "post" students, I observed that within the span of the second or third paper of the semester, a time period that normally occurred about one-third to halfway through the semester, most of them showed marked improvement in this area of their writing, making far fewer errors with commas, semicolons, agreement, possession, passive voice, etc. than my first two years of students had made at this point in the semester. This marked improvement in this area of their writing enabled them to focus more on the kinds of substantive matters that were of greater importance, and it allowed me to focus my efforts on the substance of their papers.

By the time I departed the USMA Dept. of English, I had graded more than ten thousand Cadet essays of all sorts, and this one technique of requiring students to correct errors I had noted on their essays and re-submit their essays to me, combined with classroom instruction on what I considered to be the essentials of grammar, enabled my students to make noteworthy progress in this area of their writing. Moreover, I noticed that this technique helped my weaker students most of all because they were normally the ones, based on my conversations with all of my students throughout the semester, who had done the least reading and who therefore had not internalized Standard English syntax and punctuation. Additionally, it was quite gratifying for me to see not only the improvement in this area of my students' writing but also, and more importantly, for me to hear from the students themselves how liberated and satisfied they were by this experience of learning about the basics of grammar, being required to correct basic grammar errors in their papers, and then seeing for themselves the progress their writing demonstrated. Student after student—especially students who had begun the semester weak in this area of their writing—told me either during the course of the semester or

during the course-end feedback that they were so glad to finally "know" how to properly use commas, semicolons, pronouns, etc. and that they felt so much more confident about this area of their writing.

For all of these reasons, I discussed my experience teaching grammar with my USMAPS colleagues when I began teaching at USMAPS, in September 2010. Several of my colleagues decided to use the technique of requiring their students to correct the annotated error on their essays and re-submit those essays, and they reported similar results. Additionally, when I became the Director of the English Department in March 2014, we discussed this topic as a department, and all faculty members were willing to continue this technique or employ it for the first time. All faculty have experienced the same results that I did, and we have made this kind of grammar instruction an integral part of our curriculum.

With respect to assessing our students' knowledge of grammar at the beginning of the year, we developed a fifty question, multiple choice examination that focuses on the aforementioned grammar topics. For years, students have averaged between fifty and sixty percent on this initial assessment, a range that is obvious cause for concern. However, the assessment is admittedly difficult—I probably would have scored in the low eighties if I had taken it prior to beginning my teaching career—and the wonderful news is that students then traditionally score an average of between seventy to eighty percent on the post-test, a very similar assessment given in the fourth quarter. This kind of progress has come about as a result of hard work by both students and faculty, and, more importantly, this two-letter-grade leap forward is manifested in writing on essays that is demonstrably much improved in these key areas of grammar by the end of the academic year.

The other pre- and post- vehicle used by the USMAPS English program assesses students' reading comprehension. For more than a decade, the Nelson-Denny test was that vehicle, and, while it was useful, it was rather simplistic and formulaic. This year, the

English Dept. used a different reading comprehension vehicle, an assortment of selected reading passages from a variety of AP English tests that were longer and more sophisticated than those of the Nelson-Denny test. In years past, students would normally improve their reading comprehension scores by approximately one grade level, and the English faculty are eager to see the results of this year's new test. What we are hoping to see is that students will improve their reading comprehension as they did in years past but that they will demonstrate such improvement with respect to the higher-level material in the AP English reading tests we used.

The final aspect of assessments concerns all of the other assessments the English faculty uses to measure its students' proficiency in English. In addition to the twelve essays, six pre- and post- assessments, Writing Portfolio, and twenty-seven reading quizzes already discussed, the Department uses more than twenty other assessments throughout the course of the year. That total number of assessments—sixty-seven—may seem excessive, but the USMAPS English program is based on more than one hundred thirty class sessions of seventy-five minutes each, so the program is obviously an intensive one with respect to time spent in the classroom, and many of the aforementioned assessments are brief, albeit important. As discussed, for example, the reading quizzes, which constitute close to half of the total number of assessments, take only five minutes apiece to complete but are designed to prompt students to do the readings—a constant challenge at all levels of education—to reward those who do them and to penalize those who do not, and, most importantly, to demonstrate to students that they are capable of meeting the difficult reading challenge they face and that effort really does pay dividends.

In addition to the assessments discussed above, the revised English curriculum includes fifteen quizzes on various kinds of content, three formal speaking requirements, and instructor points that are allocated in a variety of ways. The fifteen "content" quizzes assess grammar, logical fallacies, and usage. Each quarter has five of these quizzes: the

first quarter's quizzes focus on grammar; the second quarter's assess logical fallacies and usage, along with a grammar review quiz; and the third quarter's combine grammar with usage. Additionally, each student must hone his or her public speaking skills—and, for some students, that process involves overcoming what can be the huge hurdle of simply speaking in front of people, in any venue or context—via three speaking requirements. The first occurs in the second quarter and requires students to speak for four to six minutes about a topic of international or national significance that means a great deal to them. Students may use note cards during this speech but may not use any audiovisual aids because the intent of this requirement is for students to engage their audience through their words and delivery, not via PowerPoint or any other electronic media. The second speech mandates that students give a five to ten minute speech about a topic related to history and takes place in the third quarter, when students are working on their HWE 5, a research-based, argumentative essay about history; this year, that topic is the cause(s) of the Civil War. Students may use audiovisual aids in this speech but are cautioned that this requirement is still essentially a speech, not a reading of slides. The final speaking requirement is in the fourth quarter and is a dramatic reading—a recitation—of a poem or part of a poem that they have memorized. This poem or portion thereof must be approximately twenty lines in length and prepares USMAPS students well for the thirty to forty line dramatic reading they will render in EN 102 the following spring.

The last category of assessments in USMAPS English is instructor points. These points number one hundred per quarter, ten percent of each quarter's grade. The first three quarters of the revised English curriculum are quite standardized, as has been evident, but each instructor does have a great degree of latitude in each of those quarters with respect to determining how to apportion her or his instructor points. Some instructors base these points on additional writing or reading assignments; some base them on group presentations; and others, myself included, base them solely on their

students' demonstrated attitude and effort. In the fourth quarter, instructors have a great deal of flexibility with respect to the syllabus—including, again, instructor points—because the TEE at the end of the third quarter marks the end of the standardized portion of the course. Instructors must, however, teach at least two weeks of poetry in order to familiarize students with reading poetry at this level and because students will delve deeply into poetry in EN 102, and they must also assign at least one in-class and one out-of-class argumentative essay. Instructors may then assign their students a variety of short stories, long plays, and novels for the fourth quarter, and the variety of those assignments is a welcome change for student and instructor alike.

The revised syllabus for USMAPS English reflects a tremendous effort on behalf of the English faculty. It also reflects everything that that faculty holds dear with respect to preparing students for USMA English. The discussions, and debates, regarding what to include and not include, how to structure the flow of the course, how to assess students' comprehension of the material taught, and, perhaps most fundamentally, how to properly strike the balance between instructor autonomy and department uniformity, were often spirited, but many compromises were made, and the consensus of the faculty is that the curriculum in place serves its students well.

Classroom II. Life in an English classroom at USMAPS has been discussed already with respect to deportment, which is a key part of any learning environment and which comes with what initially might appear to be unusual boundaries—no cell phones, no gum, standing at attention at the beginning and end of class, etc.—but there is much more to that life in the USMAPS classroom than students' deportment. My almost twenty years of experience teaching Cadets at USMA and Cadet Candidates at USMAPS have taught me that, far from acting like robotic automatons, students at these military academies actually exhibit and possess a wide range of backgrounds, beliefs, demeanors, and behaviors. This wide range makes for a wonderful classroom environment because while the background of military courtesy and professionalism is always present, students

do not hesitate to express their opinions, and vigorous debates among students and between student and teacher often ensue. Additionally, the very small class size, almost always between fourteen to seventeen, and cozy environs of relatively small classrooms promote a spirit of engagement that is conducive to learning.

Instructors obviously vary in personality, demeanor, and pedagogy, but what is present in all USMAPS English classrooms is constant engagement: between instructor and student, between student and textbook or class notebook—students, for example, are expected to have their class notebooks on their desk and open to their class notes section at the beginning of class, and instructors stress to students the importance of taking good class notes and using them as study aids—and among students themselves, whether while working in small groups or while engaged in a classroom discussion. Life in a USMAPS English classroom is certainly no paradise because students sometimes come to class unprepared, they do occasionally attempt to surreptitiously use their cell phones, they sometimes get testy with one another, and, most of all, they are frequently quite sleepy and sometimes require Herculean efforts on the parts of instructors to be as engaging as possible. Students have even literally fallen over during class while standing in an attempt to stay alert and awake, but, fortunately, students at least make the attempt to stay alert, and they only infrequently are so tired that they fall asleep on their feet. In all, life in a USMAPS English classroom is characterized by focus, engagement, a desire to teach and to learn, and an understanding that the hard work students are putting forth is for a good reason: to prepare them as well as possible for the challenges of USMA. Several members of the English faculty have public school experience at the middle school and high school level, and to a person they claim that life in the USMAPS English classroom is challenging because of daily lesson preparation, high expectations, grading and conferencing, and other daily requirements but is ultimately wonderful because of being able to teach motivated, bright, disciplined students in a well-resourced environment.

English Faculty. This chapter has already addressed the USMAPS faculty as a whole, but the English faculty deserve their own mention, for a host of reasons but especially because of their diversity, experience, wide range of talents and interests, involvement with Cadet Candidates inside and outside of the classroom, and, ultimately, passion to help their students as much as possible. The English faculty are not diverse ethnically or racially—only one member of the faculty is non-Caucasian (a Hispanic)—but the faculty are diverse in many other ways. Two of the eight faculty are women; three faculty members have extensive active duty military experience, one faculty member spent three years in the Reserves, and four faculty members have no military experience; two faculty spent many years teaching in the West Point Department of English, two have much experience teaching at the community college level, and two taught several years in the public schools at the middle school and high school level; a majority of the faculty are married with children, but one instructor is not married, and two have no children; the faculty range in age from thirty-two to fifty-eight; they grew up in a wide variety of locations: Florida, Georgia, Texas, Washington, New York, New Jersey, Mississippi, and Wisconsin; and they have a wide range of educational backgrounds and degrees, from PhD in literature to MA in theology, from public university to private college, from USMA to USNA, the United States Naval Academy, and from being complete with their education to currently being a student. This kind of diversity brings with it a wide range of perspectives and experiences, all of which help create a rich environment within the department and within the classroom.

As expected with that kind of diversity, the English faculty have a broad range of interests, all of which come to bear upon the English classroom experience. One instructor loves history, especially American Revolutionary history; another has a passion for all things Shakespeare; one is particularly well read in fiction, while another has always focused on non-fiction readings; yet another works out daily at 0500, while his counterpart loves to cook and is a woman of great faith; and one has published a great

number of scholarly English literature works, while his colleague is just beginning that journey of publishing but is an avid fencer and war gaming expert. These kinds of diverse interests allow the faculty to easily become involved with their students outside the classroom, and, indeed, all English faculty are or have been the sponsors or assistant of a variety of USMAPS clubs. Those clubs and activities include Cross Training, rugby, fencing, movies, the yearbook, cultural activities such as cooking and Broadway plays, the American Odyssey Relay, history, the pep band, and cheerleading. Additionally, English faculty frequently attend USMAPS athletic activities to support their students on "the fields of friendly strife," and they have also pulled Staff Duty Officer, a position requiring the faculty member to spend the night at USMAPS and perform security and behavior checks throughout the evening.

What truly distinguishes and characterizes the English faculty, though, is their passion for their students. English faculty are government service (GS) employees and as such must stay at work only designated hours; for USMAPS faculty, those hours comprise an eight hour, forty-five minute duty day. Faculty must be at work no later than 0730 because classes begin at 0745, but most faculty members arrive to USMAPS before 0700, and faculty cannot depart USMAPS prior to 1530 because of the requirement to be available to students for additional instruction. However, English faculty habitually operate well outside those parameters because of the hours they devote to grading and lesson preparation, in addition to their participation in various USMAPS activities. When the USMAPS faculty were furloughed last year because of the government shutdown—at which point no one knew how long the shutdown would last— their primary concern and cause for angst was their inability to continue working with their students. The USMAPS English faculty are indeed fortunate to work at a place like USMAPS, but USMAPS is indeed fortunate to have such diverse, experienced, passionate teachers as its English faculty.

The Move Home

As this chapter on the "context" of this research project comes to a close, there are still three key topics to address: the move of USMAPS to West Point, the overarching framework of the USMAPS experience, and the longer-term results of that experience. Prior to its move to West Point, USMAPS had been at Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey since 1975. Being away from "the flagpole," as Army higher headquarters are often known, has its advantages with respect to autonomy, and Ft. Monmouth itself was located in a part of New Jersey, Ocean County, that offered a variety of wonderful options for activities such as the Jersey Shore, a vibrant nearby town, a mall just down the road from USMAPS, and reasonable proximity to New York City. West Point, by contrast, is quite isolated. The neighboring town is a pale imitation of Monmouth, there is no beach within two or three hours, the nearest mall or activities of any sort are thirty to forty minutes away by car, and, of course, USMAPS higher headquarters is three miles away, not more than one hundred. Additionally, many in the USMA and USMAPS community were concerned about the intermingling of Cadets and Cadet Candidates, in an environment that is strictly hierarchical.

As things turned out, the move from Ft. Monmouth to West Point was in balance a great one for all involved. Cadet Candidates turned their attention from the beaches of Ocean County to the high rises of New York City, a scant fifty minutes away, and they also learned about the movies, shopping, and other activities within thirty minutes of West Point. Most importantly, there has been no problem whatsoever with respect to fraternization between Cadets and Cadet Candidates. Both parties have been made well aware of the rules regarding personal interactions between them, and, probably most importantly, both parties are so busy that the three miles separating them might as well be three hundred miles because of their frenetic schedules. Additionally, the close proximity of USMAPS to USMA has not been a burden at all to the USMAPS staff and faculty with respect to an intrusive USMA staff and faculty; on the contrary, the physical proximity of

the two groups to each other has been conducive to much better coordination and support of each other's goals than was ever the case when USMAPS was at Ft. Monmouth.

Results

By this time, it would be understandable if the reader thought that the USMAPS experience was what Cadets call a "haze": an unrelenting series of deadlines, formations, discipline, and expectations. While that perspective is a plausible one in some ways, the truth of the matter is that the USMAPS experience is indeed challenging but just as importantly is also nurturing. Things such as formations, uniforms, and regimented study hours that are admittedly restrictive are also highly conducive to success because they provide a structure within which talented, motivated young men and women can thrive. These young men and women are perceptive, and they can distinguish those things that simply harass from those meant to help, and Cadet Candidates feel—anecdotally as well as via the surveys they complete at the end of their courses at USMAPS—that their USMAPS experience helped them immeasurably. In just my own limited experience, I have been told time after time over the past five years by former students just how grateful they are for their USMAPS experience and how well prepared they felt for USMA; even more importantly, they hold those feelings after having experienced all or part of their West Point experience. Cadet Candidates realize that their Tactical Officers and Noncommissioned Officers, faculty, and staff are tough but are willing to "walk the walk" in terms of helping them realize their potential.

Moreover, this kind of feedback occurred from students with widely diverse backgrounds, with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, geographical background, and performance in USMAPS English. The USMAPS student body is remarkably diverse—I know of no other institution in America that has such a diverse group of students, almost all of whom matriculate at a Tier One university—and as such has a remarkably wide range of experiences and backgrounds upon entry to USMAPS.

For example, and as stated earlier, almost half of this year's USMAPS class is African American, and that fact has all kinds of implications with respect to socioeconomic status, past interactions, self-perceptions and life experiences—e.g., one of my African American students, and one of my favorite students this semester because of his exemplary work ethic, insightful observations, and unfailingly positive demeanor, recently wrote in his midterm that he had experienced profiling on many occasions and that he had been considered by many as "just another black kid from [his hometown]"—but several key factors must be accounted for when considering what impact race and other forms of diversity have or should have on USMAPS and how USMAPS should account for that diversity.

First, all students who come to USMAPS do so voluntarily and because they obviously want to receive some combination of benefits that attending a Service Academy confers, whether those benefits be free tuition, room, and board, along with a monthly salary; playing Division One athletics; receiving a world-class education; and/or serving one's country, among any number of other benefits. Second, students volunteering to matriculate at USMAPS have been made well aware during the admissions process, as well as during the recruiting process for the roughly forty percent of Cadet Candidates who are recruited athletes, that the "M" in USMAPS stands for military, with all of the attendant factors inherently connected to that word. Thus, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, geographical background, family situation, or any other such variable, students coming to USMAPS realize that they are going to be immersed in a military lifestyle that includes wearing uniforms, getting regular haircuts, not being able to wear jewelry while in uniform, having to interact with authority figures in certain ways, and many, many other related factors. Third, and as alluded to earlier, the staff and faculty at USMAPS, and the institution itself, are grounded in values that are not specific to any race, ethnicity, or class but that have instead been proven over years and even centuries to be essential to the success of the military. These values have taken

many specific forms during the more than two hundred years the United States Army has been in existence, but all of those forms are closely related to one another and to the current set of values, ones encapsulated by the acronym LDRSHIP: leadership, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Clearly, these words have different meanings and interpretations based on one's lived experiences and one's race, ethnicity, religion, etc., but at their root, these values are ones that have served the Army in good stead and that are deserving of internalization by all of its Soldiers.

Thus, USMAPS clearly has a moral—in terms of justice—and practical—in terms of graduating students most of whom will go on to USMA—responsibility to account for and be sensitive to its students' widely varying backgrounds and great diversity. Taking steps such as having a diverse staff and faculty; holding frank, invaluable discussions in small-group settings as part of military training and intellectual development; arranging for counselors to be readily available to students in need of counseling services; and, ultimately, having the leaders of USMAPS make it clear through their words and deeds that diversity is a bedrock value, are all steps that have needed to be and have been taken. Additionally, USMAPS must always remember and make it completely clear to its students that it ultimately exists for only one reason: to prepare its students for entrance to and success at West Point. Being a Cadet Candidate at USMAPS and, in the final analysis, leading Soldiers in combat entail the seven Army values contained in LDRSHIP, and it is those values that do and should drive everything USMAPS does to prepare its students for West Point.

Chapter III

THE SOURCES: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Although I have come across many definitions and explanations of a literature review, the one that best captures the essence and purpose of a literature review and that has most informed this chapter of my dissertation is found in Bloomberg and Volpe's *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation*: "A review of the literature enables you to acquire full understanding of your topic; what has already been said about it; how ideas related to your topic have been researched, applied, and developed; the key issues surrounding your topic; and the main criticisms that have been made regarding work on your topic" (75). Additionally, Bloomberg and Volpe drove home the point that a literature review is not simply a summary of what has been read about a topic but is rather "about recasting the information into a new and different arrangement—one that is coherent, logical, and explicit" (84). Having said that, though, I need to add that Bloomberg and Volpe's notion that a literature review enables the researcher to acquire "a full understanding of your topic" is problematic in that acquiring a "full understanding" of any complex topic in the human sciences is beyond the capacity of any single researcher, if not theoretically impossible.

The review of the literature in this chapter consists of a series of logically organized sections, each of which is identified by a heading indicating an area of discourse. My aim is to lead the reader on a clearly marked, coherent journey through

what would otherwise be a thicket of texts. During my research, I learned that literally nothing has been published about my specific topic—the extent to which the USMAPS English program has impacted its students' performance in USMA English—or, even more surprisingly, about the overall impact of the Prep School on its graduates' success in the USMA curriculum or at West Point in general. After an initial burst of concern about this dearth of literature on my topic, I realized that this lack of material was actually beneficial in two ways: my research would be the first such published research on this clearly very important topic, and I would have to investigate my area of interest by reading material that is not directly linked to my topic but which is foundational to my study and which would therefore help me not only write this dissertation but also better prepare me to perform my duties as the Director of the USMAPS English Department than if I had restricted my reading to my specific research area. As the months passed and I did more and more reading for my coursework and learned more and more about related topics by virtue of that reading as well as conversations with professors and colleagues, I found that I could organize what seemed to me the literature most foundational or otherwise relevant to my study under two headings: Remediation and English Education. Before addressing remediation, though, I want to address two topics that have an intimate, extraordinarily important connection to remediation: Deficit Theory and Critical Race Theory.

Deficit Theory

Because remediation is in many ways fundamentally concerned with addressing what many would characterize as a deficit, and because Deficit Theory obviously has much to say about deficits, it is vitally important to explore this theory prior to moving to an exploration of remediation. Deficit Theory is a contentious topic because some are understandably concerned that a focus on a "deficit" of some sort will generate feelings

of inadequacy and despair in those characterized as having that deficit, while others believe that deficits can be a positive aspect of education because they stimulate discussion about improvements that need to occur. Additionally, this latter group of individuals feels that a problem cannot even begin to be resolved until it has been identified, and they believe that the term "deficit" best characterizes the problems that underlie many of the inadequacies of the American education system.

This dialogue manifests itself in many of the discussions contained in literature about the "deficit theory" of education and remediation. Generally speaking, this theory posits that many children struggle in school because of a cognitive and/or cultural "deficit" stemming largely from their environment, and one of education's most important tasks is to remedy this deficit through a variety of measures. While this theory may not seem controversial on the surface, it in fact has generated a storm of controversy because many of those who oppose it believe that viewing children as having deficits makes their teachers expect less of them and makes the students themselves expect less of themselves. Thus, upon further reflection, one can easily see the dangers inherent in this conversation. Humans, and especially children, are heavily influenced by those around them, and the expectations that one group has for another group can and has on countless occasions greatly impacted the behavior and accomplishments of that second group. If children are told and/or treated—overtly or subtly—that they have some kind of "deficit" and that they therefore are not capable of achieving as highly as those without this deficit, the former group will undoubtedly be negatively impacted by this deficit talk. Therefore, it is critically important for this conversation to take place in careful, nuanced ways, and the bottom line is that people, children included, normally rise to meet the challenges in front of them, especially if they are expected to do so and are given even close to the resources necessary to do so; thus, all children should benefit from facing high expectations and tireless efforts to help them meet those expectations.

Five texts about this topic, but especially Paul Gorski's impassioned "Unlearning Deficit Ideology and the Scornful Gaze: Thoughts on Authenticating the Class Discourse in Education," made it clear why this topic generates such strong feelings. However, it is also clear that the dialogue surrounding this topic has served to raise many critically important issues, several of which are particularly relevant to my research. Among these topics are the measurable differences that exist between children of privilege and underprivileged children; underlying socioeconomic causes of these differences; the difference between blaming the victim and examining how better to support those needing assistance; appreciating diversity; and not lowering standards or expectations. These problems are present to varying degrees at USMAPS, and reading about them has caused me to always attempt to very carefully frame how I view our students' backgrounds and how we as a faculty attempt to address what we perceive to be "shortcomings"—"deficits?"—arising from those backgrounds. Most importantly, my review of the literature about "deficit theory" has caused me to view our students as having not only deficits but also many "assets" and to believe that the USMAPS English program needs to focus on the latter category while not ignoring the former. Essentially, my beliefs about deficits or assets became very much in alignment with those of two authors I discuss in detail later in this chapter—Michal Kurlander and Laticia Bustillos—who believe that remediation should be viewed from a developmental, not deficit, perspective.

Additionally, deficit theory's thoughts regarding so-called "deficits" and the reasons for those shortfalls strongly impacted the way I conducted my study. Most importantly, deficit theory's examination of the underlying socioeconomic causes of many of the differences in performance in school between children of different socioeconomic classes caused me to think critically about a counter-intuitive finding in my study that initially caused me much consternation because it seemed to call into question the fundamental efficacy of the USMAPS English program. This finding

indicated that Direct Admits were outperforming their USMAPS counterparts in EN 101, even after factors such as standardized scores and high school transcripts had been controlled for, and it was deficit theory that made me question that finding and delve into underlying reasons for this perplexing finding, an analysis that I explain in detail in Chapter Five, Findings and Analysis.

Critical Race Theory

The second, and final, step before delving into remediation is to frame that step in the context of a topic particularly important to USMAPS, given its student body composition: critical race theory (CRT) and its impact upon examining education. The USMAPS Class of 2016 is almost half African American, and all indications are that this kind of class composition will continue indefinitely, given the Academy's strong efforts to increase its numbers of African American students and the Prep School's key role in accomplishing that goal. Diversity writ large is a frequently stated priority of USMA and USMAPS, but within the realm of diversity, race deserves special mention because of the essential, and explosive, role that race has played in this country's history. Furthermore, within the realm of race and minorities, African Americans clearly are of paramount importance because of their numbers; their tragedies and triumphs in the face of longstanding, overt as well as implicit racism; and their impact on this nation.

The topics discussed earlier—privilege, socioeconomic status, blame, and expectations—apply to all under-served students, but CRT argues convincingly that the African American, or Black, experience with these and related topics deserves special mention because of the unique history of Blacks in America. It is well beyond the focus of this study to explore that history in any detail, but suffice it to say that countless texts have done that exploration, and the emphasis here will be on exploring what CRT offered in the way of this dissertation and its research. Regarding those texts, two seminal works

in this field are Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV's "Toward a Critical Race Theory" and H. Richard Milner's "Analyzing Poverty, Learning, and Teaching Through a Critical Race Theory."

Although both of these articles are extraordinarily influential with respect to exploring connections between race and education, Ladson-Billing and Tate's article was published almost twenty years earlier (1995) than Milner's (2013) and is thus the foundational piece of the two. Moreover, while authors ranging from W.E.B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson to Cornel West have been discussing race and its impact on education for decades, Ladson-Billing and Tate are two of the pioneers of Critical Race Theory, a theory that asserts that race is not just "an" important factor in analyzing the African American education experience but that it is "the" important factor in such an analysis. Ultimately, as developed by Ladson-Billing and Tate, CRT is "a radical critique of both the status quo [of] and the purported reforms" (62) regarding education.

In their article, the authors contend, for the first time in the literature, that race should be used as a primary lens through which education in America is viewed, in much the same way that theorists of the time were contending that race needed to be considered in legal scholarship (47). Ladson-Billings and Tate base their argument on three propositions—"(1) race continues to be significant in the United States; (2) U.S. society is based on property rights rather than human rights; and (3) the intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool for understanding [educational] inequity" (47)—and they also assert that race is "untheorized" (47) as an analytical tool in scholarship about education. While these fundamental aspects of "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education" are certainly thought-provoking contentions and serve as the foundation of this article, this article's two most salient points with respect to my research concern the authors' claims regarding truth as well as what they call "rights of disposition" (59). As discussed in detail in the "Context" chapter, USMAPS is a military as well as an educational institution, and one characteristic of most military organizations, USMAPS

included, is a characterization of the "truth" as a binary entity; that is, something is either true or not true, and the nature of that truth is clearly discernible to all. In "Toward a Critical Race Theory," though, Ladson-Billings and Tate state that CRT contends that "moral analysis is situational—'truths only exist for this person in this predicament at this time in history'…and social reality is constructed…" (57). Moreover, the authors claim that "whiteness" is a property that can be disposed—given or taken away—and that students are often times rewarded only when they conform to white norms and are punished when they do not conform to these norms, whether with respect to speech, writing, dress, or behavior (59).

These two contentions were quite eye-opening for me because they go so strongly against the grain of what I had always thought about the nature of truth and the standards that teachers should apply to student speech and writing, respectively. Although Ladson-Billings and Tate do not present what I believed to be compelling evidence in support of either of these claims—that "truth" is fundamentally situational and that there exists an important element of "whiteness" in speech and writing that serves as the basis for rewarding or punishing students, based on how well they conform to this element—their thoughts regarding these topics are well considered and did indeed cause me to look at the connection between truth and race, on the one hand, and grading standards, on the other hand, in ways that I had not considered. I address both of these issues in the "Context" chapter when I discuss the Army values embodied in the term LDRSHIP and the need for Army officers to be competent users of Standard English, but that discussion does not signify my belief that Ladson-Billings and Tate's claims regarding truth and standards are wrong; rather, it points out the practical need for Cadet Candidates to imbue the Army values and become proficient in Standard English.

"Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education" laid the foundation for Critical Race Theory and played a key role in my understanding of that theory, but H. Richard Milner's "Analyzing Poverty, Learning, and Teaching Through a Critical Race Theory" was

especially useful to my study because it highlights issues pertaining to a significant number of USMAPS students in ways that I had not considered prior to reading it. I have been in a diverse organization—the U.S. Army—most of my adult life and have read about and discussed diversity on many occasions, in addition, of course, to living with and interacting with a very diverse population for decades, but prior to reading Milner, I had not looked at my life's calling—education—in a way that focused exclusively on race. Milner makes several profound points in *Analyzing Poverty*…, and his purpose is contained in his opening paragraph: "In particular, I use critical race theory as an analytic tool to unpack, shed light on, problematize, disrupt, and analyze how systems of oppression, marginalization, racism, inequity, hegemony, and discrimination are pervasively present and ingrained in the fabric of…education" (1). Of the myriad salient points Milner addresses to develop his purpose, there are five, all of which are addressed in the following two paragraphs, that are especially germane to USMAPS English and my research.

The first three of these five key points all focus on the word "matter," as in race matters; culture and environment matter; and teachers, teaching, and curriculum matter. An essential claim of CRT is that race itself constitutes a necessary element of examining many topics of importance, education included, and Milner asserts this connection by claiming that "…race is a central component to the ways in which researchers should analyze and think through what they find in their studies" (27), "…race matters in society and consequently in education" (11), and, "…even when we hold constant for class, middle-class African American students do not achieve at the same level as their White counterparts" (11). Thus, race, in and of itself, is not only necessary but is also sufficient with respect to acting as a lens for studying education because key aspects of education seem to be closely connected to race itself. Additionally, Milner strongly asserts that culture and environment matter, when he provides the information that "…of different racial and ethnic groups living in poverty…African American, Hispanic, and White

students experience more academic problems than students from more affluent families. However, the researchers found no difference between those from low SES and high SES Asian students—a nontrivial finding" (24). Milner contends that this important distinction arises from the different cultures of the two groups, in that "…strong values and high expectations of the Asian students' families were common between both the low and high SES students, which resulted in [their] success" (24), thereby clearly confirming his argument about the importance of culture and environment on student performance. Finally, Milner asserts that "…teachers can be the most powerful *inside-of-school* predictors of success for students" and "…curriculum rigor…was the strongest inside-of-school predictor of student and academic achievement" (6). Based on the detailed discussion of these same topics in the Context chapter of this dissertation, one can easily see the connection between that discussion and CRT, especially when Milner also makes the claim that "curriculum is policy" (28).

The two other key areas Milner addresses that are intimately connected with this study are the "achievement gap" and student-teacher interactions. Concerning the former, Milner makes the powerful claim that "Rather than focusing on a perceived achievement gap…attention should be placed on closing other gaps that exist in education: the teacher quality gap; the teaching training gap; the challenging curriculum gap; the school funding gap" and many other relevant gaps (22), and he follows this claim with the poignant observation that "…an achievement gap does not exist at birth between Black students and White ones" (22). With respect to the latter point, teacher-student interaction, Milner highlights the importance of teachers "…understanding who students really are" and "[using] their learning about students and their families to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct what is taught and how [it] is taught" in order to empower students to "…speak against injustice, inequity, and…unfortunate realities" (39).

Milner's powerful, insightful words as stated in the five points of the preceding two paragraphs clearly and directly pertain to much of what was in this study's Context chapter and what is also in its findings, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations. Fundamentally, though, the most important contributions to this dissertation that stem directly from Milner's work and CRT are that race matters and that educators, especially those working with large numbers and percentages of racially diverse students, must be constantly cognizant of race with respect to the perceptions, experiences, and worldviews of their students and must constantly work to address these factors with respect to pedagogy, curricula, and personal interactions, all of which are relevant to this study and are addressed in detail in its Chapters Two, Five, and Six.

Remediation

Overview

This section of my literature review is by far the longest and arguably the most important of that review, so it merits its own overview. This research project examined the extent to which the USMAPS English program prepared its students for the USMA English program, and the essence of that program, as detailed in the "Context" chapter, is preparation of talented and intelligent students but ones under-prepared for success at one of the most demanding educational institutions in America. This preparation is at its essence arguably remediation, and this section of my literature review examines that relationship—between preparation and remediation—in great detail. Remediation is an enormously complex topic with literally hundreds if not thousands of categories that could be discussed in countless ways, but the following organization constitutes what I believe is a logical, comprehensive examination of remediation: its scope, nature, goals, forms, history, extent, and efficacy. Efficacy is in turn arguably the most important of these categories and is therefore further sub-divided into the nature of success/failure (of

remediation), examples of success/failure, numbers and kinds of assessments of success/failure—a topic that contains the crucially important sub-topic of control groups—results of these assessments of success/failure, and, finally, concerns about these assessments.

These topics are in some cases closely related to one another, but I use them in distinctive ways to examine different facets of remediation. Additionally, some of these topics are much longer or shorter than their counterparts, but each one addresses a distinctive aspect of remediation and as such deserves its own category. Moreover, each section and sub-section of the remediation portion of this literature review offers a working definition of the topic at hand very early in the discussion of that topic. Remediation is an integral part of the landscape of American education, and attitudes toward it fall into essentially two camps: those who view it as a gateway to success for students who would not otherwise be successful and those who consider it to be a well-intentioned but costly roadblock that inadvertently prevents the very access it is supposed to encourage. As we will see, the literature contains research evidence to support both camps.

Promise

Remediation is thus a controversial topic, but ultimately it offers great promise, so before delving into the many categories of remediation highlighted previously, I want to briefly discuss five works that highlight the promise inherent in institutions such as USMAPS that prepare under-prepared young men and women to take their place in Tier 1 universities and colleges such as West Point. The prospects for this kind of preparation are analyzed by Robert McCabe and Philip Day in their work "Developmental Education: A 21st Century Imperative," in which they assert that the past successes of developmental programs—programs very similar to the one offered by USMAPS—bode well for the changing needs of today's students and those who will take their place in the classroom

throughout the 21st Century. McCabe and Day, as well as scholars such as Miles Myers, believe that U.S. schools have ultimately succeeded time and again in rising to changing challenges and that they will continue to do so; on a micro-level, I hope to gain insight into the prospects of USMAPS being part of this success.

In "Bridging the Gap: A Community College and Area High Schools Collaborate to Improve Student Success," author Laura Berry provides strong evidence of the ability of preparatory programs—such as community colleges and post-secondary preparatory schools like USMAPS—to enable students to make up lost ground and prepare themselves for college work. In this study, Berry shows that educators at North Arkansas Community College (NACC) and four surrounding high schools were able to accomplish significant progress both in preparing students for the math curriculum at NACC as well as for four-year college math programs. Even more importantly, she claims that the single most important predictor of success in college is the rigor of the pre-college curriculum, a claim with obvious ramifications for USMAPS as it prepares its Cadet Candidates for West Point.

This point is amplified is Kati Haycock's article "Closing the Achievement Gap," in which she asserts that the pre-college curriculum and expectations of success are not only two significant factors in predicting success in college but that they are clearly the two most important factors. Ms. Haycock interviewed a number of students from low-income families who attended under-resourced schools, and the point that intrigued her was that while these students understood the challenges posed by their environment, they essentially argued that "Sure, those things [poverty, crime, lack of role models, etc.] matter. But what really hurts us more is that you teach us less" (7). This claim about the importance of being challenged with high expectations and a rigorous curriculum again speaks volumes about the project underway at USMAPS.

While Haycock's article speaks in a positive manner of the desire of under-served students to be challenged in order to close the gap between them and their better-served

peers, Mike Rose's *Back to School: Why Everyone Deserves a Second Chance at Education* presents an even more compelling, and much more lengthy, argument in favor of what is often characterized as remedial education. In this book, Rose tackles head-on the perceptions of many, often backed by "research" that "demonstrates" the point in question, that resources devoted to second chances and remedial education are wasted. Rose claims that "the challenge … is to be clear-eyed and vigilant about performance but to use methods of investigation that capture the full story of the institutions and the people in them" (16). Rose cautions that statistics are often misinterpreted and in ways that greatly understate the great work that remedial education—often in community colleges and technical schools—does for thousands of students. Rose is certainly not saying that remediation works for all students—unfortunately, thousands of students do not succeed despite remediation—but he does compellingly claim that remediation has helped many more students than it has failed and that its successes must be carefully examined, lest they be dismissed or under-appreciated because of "research."

The fifth and final work in this initial examination of the promise of remediation is housed at the Special Collections section of the West Point Library—officially known as the Thomas Jefferson Learning Center—and was written by John Houston, a researcher at the West Point Office of Institutional Research. Its title is *A Comparison of USMA Prep School Graduates in the USMA Class of 1973 with Other Cadets at Entrance in July 1969*. This work reveals a number of quite interesting comparisons between these two groups of cadets (students), but the gist of the study is that USMAPS graduates face steeper academic obstacles to graduation than do direct admit students but that they succeed in graduating at the almost the same rate as their counterparts, clearly a significant finding and one that reflects favorably on the remediation done at USMAPS.

Scope

This literature review's focus regarding remediation will be on postsecondary remediation because of the nature of my research project: an examination of a postsecondary institution focused upon remediation. Much of great importance has been written about all kinds of remediation and specifically about remediation at the K-12 level, but I had to focus my research on (almost) only remediation dealing with postsecondary education because my project is at its essence an examination of the degree to which a certain type of postsecondary remediation has succeeded, or not, in preparing students for undergraduate work, and examining only this aspect of remediation was nonetheless a very challenging task. Remediation at the K-12 level is so difficult to define—many would argue that it is not remediation at all but rather simply helping under-performing students—and impacted by so many outside forces stemming from social, psychological, economic, and policy matters that it was simply too broad to attend to, especially for this study. Remediation at the post-secondary level, though, is based on a presumption of a standard of literacy that is represented by college-level assignments. Additionally, there is an educational history of remediation at this level, particularly with respect to reading and writing and problems of literacy, along with a commensurate literature about this kind of remediation. These factors combined to lead me to limit the scope of my examination to remediation to post-secondary and college-level remediation.

Nature

Of the more than fifty books and articles that form the basis of this literature review, many of which are seminal pieces, the vast majority begin, continue, and end their discussions and analyses with nary an attempt at defining the concept at the core of their discussion. Instead, they assume that the reader knows what this foundational term means, and they continue from that point. Fortunately, though, a number of authors do define this term: "[Remediation is] … a class or activity intended to meet the needs of

students who initially do not have the skills, experience or orientation necessary to perform at a level that the institutions or instructors recognize as 'regular' for those students" (Levin), "…coursework below college-level offered at a post-secondary institution" (Calcagno), or "…a course or a sequence of courses for college-admitted students who, upon taking required placement exams, are found not to have the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college-level courses" (Bustillos). Based on these definitions as well as my experience in the USMA and USMAPS English classroom, I believe that remediation is essentially a matter of redressing a deficiency of knowledge, based on a perceived difference between what the student knows and what he/she should know, at that stage of his or her education. This understanding of remediation is especially important for my project because it underlies the reason for the existence of USMAPS: raising motivated but under-prepared students to a level of knowledge and study habits that will foster their success at a very challenging undergraduate institution.

Goals

The fundamental goal of remediation seems relatively uncontroversial—if one accepts the need for remediation in the first place, a much more controversial matter, as we will see—in that it seeks to prepare students deemed to be under-prepared to succeed at the next level of their education. Ultimately, remediation arises because students have been advanced to a level—whether kindergarten, senior year in high school, or freshman year at college—for which they are felt to be unprepared. Multitudes of texts have been written regarding the travails of the American K-12 system and the problems of its postsecondary system, but the bottom-line seems to be that, for a wide variety of reasons that range far beyond the scope of this literature review, thousands of students each year and at all levels of schooling are categorized as unprepared for the level of schooling to

which they have been advanced or admitted; it is at this point that remediation comes into play with, as we will see, widely varying interpretations of its efficacy.

In addition to this discussion of the fundamental goal of remediation, the literature offers a number of interesting insights regarding specific goals concerning remediation, to which this review now turns. One such goal concerns faculty satisfaction; indeed, many studies, including Arthur Cohen and Florence Brower's *The American Community College,* have shown that faculty perceptions of student abilities constitute one of the most significant aspects of job satisfaction, and many faculty support remediation because they believe that it improves those abilities (297). Whether remediation actually helps students is another matter and is a topic which this review will address, but many faculty clearly believe it does, so having remediation satisfies that goal of faculty satisfaction. Another significant goal of remediation is to enable students to attain educational credentials, the attainment of which would otherwise not occur and which clearly leads to significant monetary advantages. In just one example of the powerful impact higher education can have on earning power, David Levinson's *Community Colleges* found that the difference between attaining a high school diploma and an associate's degree is upwards of $400,000 over the course of a lifetime of earnings (23).

Study after study, in all areas of life, has demonstrated that diversity has benefits, and education is no exception: "…it is the rapid increase in the enrollment of women and foreign students in graduate and professional programs that has been the principal driver of progress…. Learning to be more inclusive has had clear-cut benefits for higher education…." (Bowen 246). This review of the literature did not find any similar findings regarding other minorities—African Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, among others—but it is clear that these groups are making their own contributions to education and society as a result of their being included in higher education, which of course is one of the primary goals of remediation. An additional, quite intriguing facet of the goals of remediation stems from a goal that most remediation programs, as well as

almost all undergraduate programs, do not pursue: the study and inculcation of non-cognitive attributes. In *Class and Schools*, author Richard Rothstein discusses the fascinating findings of a detailed survey of a large number of employers: most employers claimed that personality traits such as trustworthiness, diligence, integrity, and interpersonal skills were much more important than traditional measures of competence such as analytical skills and reading comprehension (151). This finding has obvious implications not only for what probably should be and in many cases is a goal of remediation but also for education in general, for it calls into question the essence of what schools should teach and what they should seek in the students who apply for admission, given that Rothstein's survey revealed the extremely important finding that non-cognitive attributes, many of which are essentially character traits, are even more important than their cognitive counterparts. During my research, I came across remedial program after program that tried to imbue its students with these non-cognitive traits, for the long-term reason that employers report that they seek these traits and shorter-term reasons dealing with success in school.

A final, traditional goal of remediation is of course to decrease what William Tierney and Linda Hagedorn in *Increasing Access to College* call a "supply side" shortage of qualified applicants for higher education (1). Their point is that colleges and universities can do everything possible to make higher education more accessible, but these efforts are only one lane of a two-way highway; these efforts can only go so far, and, when the efforts of the K-12 system have not achieved the desired results, remediation can hopefully help to close the gap. With respect to the goals of remediation, a final, and non-traditional, such goal is the one posited by Mary Soliday in her recent book *The Politics of Remediation*. In this work, Soliday claims that remediation is more closely tied to institutional needs than to the true needs of students. Essentially, Soliday asserts that institutions of higher education use remediation not primarily to help students but rather to meet admissions requirements, enrollment needs, and curriculum goals

(1-19). Soliday's discussion is certainly thought-provoking, and it does raise legitimate concerns about the nature of the commitment of higher education to remediation. However, Soliday's concern does not ultimately call into question the motives or commitment of the educators who do the work of teaching remedial and developmental courses and who are usually the hardest working and the lowest ranked faculty members in higher education. That fact, however, along with the fact that instructors who teach remedial courses are those most likely to be contingent faculty with no prospects for tenure or advancement in universities, suggests that Soliday's critique may be warranted.

Forms

To accomplish its goals, remediation has taken many forms. Although remediation that occurs in secondary education is beyond the scope of my research project and thus this literature review, it is interesting to note that some high schools are "guaranteeing" their diplomas by agreeing to pay the remediation costs incurred by any of their graduates, a program outlined by Eric Bettinger and Bridget Terry Long in "The Role and Effect of Remediation in Two-Year Colleges" (3). I did not find any research on the results of this program, but its existence does highlight the attention that remediation receives at the high school level. Additionally, most high schools offer "college courses" or "college preparatory courses" that are supposed to obviate the need for any kind of remediation. These courses, most familiar in the guise of the many Advanced Placement (AP) courses available at a large number of high schools, are another avenue high schools have taken to eliminate or reduce the need for remediation, and it is almost "common knowledge" that students taking these courses are indeed among the best prepared high school graduates for college work. However, that result is hardly surprising, given the type of student who self-selects and is prepared to take and succeed in these courses. The final form of remediation I will address before moving on to the main types of remediation this literature review addresses is the "remediation" that occurs at the high

end of the spectrum, i.e., in selective, expensive preparatory schools that dot the country but that are most common in the Northeast and New England and that prepare their students for selective or highly selective colleges and universities. To categorize this kind of education as "remedial" is clearly controversial, but it nonetheless fits into this category because its purpose in many, if not most, cases is to take students who would probably achieve at a certain level and enable them to achieve at a higher level, in much the same way that remediation works at the community college or university level.

Three quite interesting results arose from a review of the literature concerning these kinds of preparatory schools. First, many of these schools, contrary to the image I always had of them, cater to students who are not particularly accomplished, in terms of standardized scores or grade-point averages, according to Peter Cookson and Caroline Persell in *Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding Schools* (167). Second, these students do, however, gain acceptance into top-tier colleges and universities at a higher rate than their standardized scores and high school GPAs would indicate (185). This fact is a reason for cynicism regarding these schools and their efforts at remediation because they appear to give an unfair admissions advantage to their students, but, interestingly enough, these students seem to fare just as well at elite postsecondary institutions as do their apparently better prepared brethren—those students who are what USMA calls Direct Admits (186). Third, and in a much more refreshing light, it is clear that many of the educators at these institutions see their mission as one of not simply gaining Ivy League admissions for their students but rather of inculcating in their students a love of learning and a development of the whole person. Several of the headmasters interviewed in the literature stated that morality was more important than intellect (5, 31), and many of them strongly felt that their institutions had an obligation to enable their students to remove themselves from the negative influences of popular culture and focus on a love of learning and giving back to society, as Arthur Powell argues in *Lessons from Privilege: The American Prep School Tradition* (2, 6, 239). Indeed, one of the most powerful—and

ironic, given my focus on research—comments I read was that the success preparatory schools enjoy "…rests much more upon experience and common sense than on research or scientific discovery" (247). This comment certainly coincides with my twenty years of classroom experience, and it gives one pause regarding the constant refrain of "research indicates…." These points demonstrate that remediation occurs at many levels and takes a variety of forms and that one must remain humble as one attempts to determine the best route to enable learning.

Remediation can take and has taken many varying—sometime widely varying—forms. In "What Works in Remediation," authors Hunter Boylan and Patrick Saxon explore some of the most prominent of these forms. They found that behaviorist techniques were predominant in many kinds of remedial courses (2) and that mastery learning—i.e., breaking down a complex task such as writing into smaller, discrete tasks and not advancing to the next step until the student has mastered the current one—was a feature of much remediation. Additionally, they found that a variety of teaching techniques were employed, including large lectures, small-group instruction, multimedia, and one-on-one (4). With respect to the forms that remediation takes on an institutional level, they found that some schools placed remediation within respective academic departments while others centralized remediation in its own department (5). Additionally, in "Exploring Alternatives to Remediation," Hunter Boylan offers another comprehensive look at the forms remediation can take, including individual tutoring, study skills courses, freshmen orientation seminars, learning communities, paired courses (e.g., a history course with a reading skills course), critical thinking instruction, and learning communities (3, 5-7). This review of the literature will focus in later sections on the efficacy of these and other forms of remediation, but American educators have clearly implemented remediation in a wide variety of forms, with varying results. Most importantly, though, for the purposes of my research project as well as regarding the instruction for which I am responsible at USMAPS, this part of my review of the

literature has proved to be fertile ground regarding the many forms taken by remedial instruction.

History

Two quite illuminating aspects of the history of remediation in America are that it has been in existence for as long as education has—for example, one of the earliest features of Harvard University, as Arthur Powell states in *Lessons from Privilege: The American Prep School Tradition*, was its reliance on tutors to help "underprepared" students (13)—and that educators have been bemoaning the need for remediation throughout the history of American education, as Steven Brint explains in *The Diverted Dream* (4). In that same vein, America has developed one of the most extensive—in terms of breadth and depth—systems of education the world has known, but that development has occurred in fits and starts and with great controversy. Interestingly, and ironically, one of the leading reasons for the widespread expansion of the American education system that took place in the early twentieth century was the fear that America was going to be overrun by immigrants, who needed to be "educated" and assimilated into American culture, as outlined by William Bowen, et al in *Equity and Excellence in American Education* (244).

To deal with this attempt to educate such large numbers of people, remediation came to the forefront, and one of its earliest manifestations was the "preparatory school," which assumed many guises. One such form was the civilian preparatory school that came to assume such a prominent role in the education of America's upper classes and that was addressed in another context in an earlier section of this chapter, well known examples of which are Choate Rosemary Hall, Andover, Exeter, and Blair Academy, among others. These and other such schools were founded in the nineteenth century and focused on preparing—remediating, in many ways—students for higher education. Additionally, preparatory/remedial schools of another sort were also a prominent feature

of America's attempt to prepare large numbers of students for advanced education. This sort of school was the military school and involved a combination of boarding and day-school students. Noteworthy examples of such schools are Valley Forge Military College, Marion Military Institute, Fork Union Military Academy, and New Mexico Military Institute.

Finally, another significant example of an attempt to deal with the remediation required by large numbers of students attempting to gain access to higher education is the community college. This uniquely American institution addressed in Leland Medsker's *The Junior College: Progress and Prospect* (10) began at the dawn of the twentieth century and in the intervening hundred-plus years has grown to involve hundreds of institutions and millions of students. In any case, all of these schools, regardless of their particular structure and focus, constitute a representative sample of American efforts to prepare certain types of students for higher education. To close this circle—the history of remediation in America—it will be useful to consider one of the conclusions Jane Stanley reaches in *The Rhetoric of Remediation*. Her examination of the University of California system found that what she calls the "Eden of Proficiency" has never existed at Cal-Berkeley, at any University of California school, or at any college in America; rather, every school she studied, for as long as it has existed, has had as part of that existence a narrative involving the perceived need for remediation (1,3, 138).

Extent

The extent of remediation in American education is staggering, on many levels. First of all, the number of students involved in some kind of remediation is astounding. According to "Remediation in the Community College," 29% of students at four year institutions and more than 60% of those enrolled at community colleges are involved in remediation (Levin 1). Additionally, the types of students involved in remediation are disproportionately minority, poor, and first-time college attendees, according to Lillian

Kovar in *Here to Complete Dr. King's Dream* (77) and Lauren O'Gara in "Student Success Courses in the Community College" (1). Moreover, this remediation has an enormous cost, both in terms of tuition paid for what are in many cases non-credit courses and in terms of lost and delayed earning power. For example, more than a decade ago, public four-year colleges were estimated to spend almost two billion dollars a year on remediation, and, one state alone, Florida, spent over $100 million on remediation at its community colleges (1).

Part of the reason for this pervasive reach of remediation in American postsecondary education is the advent of the community college, an institution that by its nature and mission is intimately connected with remediation. As Arthur Cohen and Florence Brower point out in *The American Community College*, while the community college began more than a century ago, in 1901, enrollment in this kind of college had grown to only 500,000 by 1960; however, fifty years later, there were more than 1,300 community colleges in America, with an enrollment of more than 6,000,000 (Cohen 15). Furthermore, while Levin (previous paragraph) claims that more than 60% of students at community colleges are enrolled in remediation, by the late 1990's, 99% of community colleges offered remediation in at least one subject (Boylan 1). An additional contributing factor to this widespread need for remediation is the long-lamented poor state of many of America's high schools. In "Reforming Remedial Education," the author claims (1) that only 25% of students who took the ACT in 2012 were rated as "college ready" in all four areas of the test, so it is not surprising that large numbers of students are involved in some kind of remediation, whether it be at community colleges or four-year institutions.

These kinds of statistics call into question many critically important considerations, but, fundamentally, they can certainly make one question the very nature of American education and, specifically, higher education. As stated previously, America is the only country in the world with a system of community colleges, and it was quite surprising to learn that America is also the only nation on earth with a system of liberal arts colleges;

apparently, all other countries with systems of postsecondary education have universities and colleges that have at least an element of technical education imbedded within them, a finding stated in Michael Kirst and Andrea Venezia's *From High School to College: Improving Opportunities for Success in Postsecondary Education* (211). Additionally, because more than 70% of high school graduates in America will eventually pursue some kind of postsecondary education (2), and because American high schools have well-documented problems providing uniformly good educations to their students, it is no surprise that so many of these tens of thousands of graduates need further preparation for college work even after being admitted to college.

These points highlight the debate between access and excellence that has raged unabated for decades and will almost certainly continue for years to come. With respect to the role remediation plays in this debate among those who support wider access to college, some argue that remediation is the key that helps unlock the gate to prosperity, while others argue that it ultimately serves only to hinder progress by preventing students enrolled in it from ever advancing to credit-bearing courses. Conversely, among those who view college excellence as being diluted by too much access, remediation is considered the tool that is opening the floodgates. Regardless of which part of the literature concerning access to higher education one is reviewing, though, remediation is a topic that author after author addresses. Again, some argue that easy access increases opportunity for many, while others argue that "easy-in simply means easy-out" as woefully under-prepared students find that they cannot handle the demands of college, whether it be of the four year or community college type. Authors such as Micheal Kirst and Andrea Venezia or Bowen, Kurzweil, and Tobin in *Equity and Excellence* offer a variety of prescriptions to alleviate the tension between excellence and access, and most of these solutions focus on closer coordination between high schools and the postsecondary institutions they serve, but ultimately the literature reveals that the issues underlying this debate will only ever be at best partially resolved by America's educators.

In this debate, as with so many others, class matters, and class has been shown in study after study in country after country to heavily impact educational results; however, these results are magnified in a country such as America, with much greater divides within its classes than within the classes of so many of its competitors (Bowen 88). After reviewing much literature about this topic of access vs. excellence and the role that remediation plays in it, I believe that it is noteworthy that the most powerful observation on the topic came from someone not from America but from a country that has had to deal with its own legacy of gross inequality: South Africa. After wrestling with the issue of access vs. excellence, the President of the University of Cape Town concluded that this issue is not an "either-or" matter; instead, he concluded that true excellence was literally not possible without the widest possible access because without that kind of access, the talent pool for excellence was irretrievably damaged (283).

Efficacy

Arguably the most important aspect of remediation is whether it works—its efficacy—and, if it does work, the degree to which it works. This aspect of remediation is important to many constituencies, but two of the most important of these groups are all of those educators—and students—who want answers to these two crucial questions and legislators, primarily at the state but also at the local and Federal level, who understandably want some kind of measure of the "bang for the buck" of remediation. To address the efficacy of remediation, the following paragraphs will focus upon the nature of success and failure with respect to remediation; examples of this success and failure; the number and kinds of assessments of remediation's success or failure; the results of these assessments; and the concerns about these assessments.

Nature of success and failure. Remediation at the postsecondary level occurs, broadly speaking, at the community college and at the four-year college/university levels. This kind of remediation does occur at post-secondary preparatory schools, but those

schools are relatively small in number, and I unfortunately did not come across a single study of the efficacy of remediation at preparatory schools that answers any of the crucial questions that occasioned my own study. Certainly, many preparatory schools keep track of how many of their students are accepted into college, what kind of improvements their students make on standardized tests, and the like, but I am not aware of any studies of postsecondary preparatory schools that attempt to answer the fundamental question of "To what extent, if any, was the education received at the preparatory school responsible for whatever improvements occurred and whatever college acceptances that occurred?" Regarding the nature of success at community colleges, the great majority of the literature focuses on success being constituted by a variety of factors, most notably persistence—staying enrolled in school—the attainment of a certificate or associate's degree, and/or transfer to a four-year institution. Ultimately, remediation at the community college-level is considered successful when it contributes to the accomplishment of these goals.

Concerning remediation at the four-year college or university, remediation is deemed a success when it leads to students' advancing to credit-bearing courses and ultimately to graduation. Failure, of course, is constituted by students' not accomplishing these goals at the community or four-year college or, on a different level, not being able to accomplish non-remediation goals because of being required to devote resources to tasks, primarily courses, mandated by remediation that would have been better used in other ways. Many educators and researchers criticize remediation for this kind of failure because they believe that in many instances required remediation work serves as an insurmountable obstacle, instead of a pathway, to success because students waste invaluable time, energy, and money taking courses that they do not pass and that seem pointless to many of the students taking them.

Examples of success and failure. This sub-section provides examples of studies touting the success or bemoaning the failure of remediation, but this discussion is limited

to simply providing those examples and a very brief synopsis of their main points; a much fuller discussion of the implications of these examples of success and failure occur in the next three sub-sections—the final three sections of the remediation portion of this literature review. At the community college level, the literature contains numerous examples of different kinds of remediation that seem to contribute to student success. Two noteworthy examples of this success occurred in Maryland and Texas. Alex Kuczynski-Brown explains in "Maryland Community Colleges Taking A Different Approach to Remedial Coursework" how Anne Arundel Community College in Maryland used a combination of full-blown online remedial courses as well as online remedial "modules" targeted at specific weaknesses to increase the pass rate of its basic math course from 50% to more than 60%, while the Community College of Baltimore County (Maryland) incorporated individualized remedial instruction into its basic English courses and saw a marked increase in the pass rate for this course: from 30% to over 70% (1). Meanwhile, in "Plotting a Path to Success," Paul Bradley shows how two Texas community colleges—Laredo and Tarrant County—instituted a series of remediation reforms that resulted in a significantly higher transfer rate to four-year institutions for its students than for students from similar community colleges that did not incorporate these changes. Foremost among these changes was clearly designating how remedial courses were going to enable students enrolled in them to get on the transfer pathway so that students realized that their efforts at completing the remedial courses were not wasted (1-2). In both cases, remediation can be cautiously deemed to be the cause of success because it was the only significant factor that changed before the innovative improvements. However, as will shortly be discussed, these experiments fall into the category that encapsulates so many such experiments: those that are not rigorous because they provide insufficient detail regarding all of the factors that might have come into play concerning the noted improvements.

I found several discussions regarding how not requiring students to take remediation courses—that is, the "failure" of typical remediation—but rather allowing them to enroll directly in credit-bearing courses supplemented by a variety of support measures—extra class meetings, additional instruction, courses lasting two semesters instead of one—resulted in significantly higher success rates for these students (Complete 9). Specifically, Austin Peay State University eliminated remedial math courses and replaced them with workshops and specialized help, which resulted in twice as many "remedial" students' passing initial college-level math courses as was the case prior to using this technique (9). Additionally, some colleges have taken the route of requiring remediation courses but having students concurrently register in credit-bearing courses, and Texas State University at San Marcos has seen pass rates for remedial students enrolled in this program increase twofold (9). In both of these cases, the key to success seems to be a disregard for typical "pre" remediation courses and a reliance upon extra assistance as a "co" requisite instead of a "pre" requisite.

Kinds and numbers of assessments of remediation's success and failure. The literature contains a wealth of information about the kinds and numbers of assessments regarding whether remediation was efficacious, that is, whether it was a success or failure. These assessments fall into two general kinds of categories: those considering community colleges and those regarding four-year institutions. In both cases, however, there exists a surprisingly small number of comprehensive, rigorous studies of this sort—the success or failure of remediation—for reasons I will discuss in upcoming paragraphs.

Studies of the success or failure of remediation at community colleges center upon the states of Florida, California, Texas, and Ohio. Given that the first three of these states are the three most populous states in the country and also have the three largest systems of community colleges, it is understandable and fortuitous that they have been the subject of these kinds of studies. Moreover, Ohio is a strong candidate for these kinds of studies because it is populous—the sixth most populous state in the country—contains a mix of

rural and urban centers, has a diverse mix of public and private schools, and possesses a combination of enrollment and remediation rates similar to the national average (Bettinger 7-8). Regarding studies of the efficacy of remediation at four-year institutions, there unfortunately seem to be even fewer comprehensive, methodologically sound studies of these institutions than of their two-year counterparts. There are a number of these studies that I came across after extensive research of this topic, and I will address them in detail shortly, but, for reasons that I will also address shortly, studies of this sort unfortunately are few and far between.

Because remediation is an integral part of American education, I was quite surprised to learn that much of the literature about remediation bemoans the dearth of rigorous studies about remediation: "…problems with existing research [regarding the efficacy of remediation] stem from the paucity of existing data" (Levin 10), and "very few states gather comprehensive data on who is enrolled in remediation, how well they perform and how much it costs" (Complete 1). One of the key reasons for the shortage of these studies is that although legislators want, and in many cases demand, data about remediation's effects, those same legislators do not adequately fund such research (Cohen 385). This disconnect between desired results and devoted resources is not new and will undoubtedly continue to plague this field, but, as our economy continues to demand a more highly educated workforce, and as more and more students enter postsecondary education in response to that demand, this disconnect will become more acute, which will hopefully prompt legislators to allot more resources to studying the effects of remediation.

One overriding reason for the shortage of studies of the efficacy of remediation seems abundantly clear from the literature: these studies are ultimately very difficult to conduct because of the nature of the knowledge being sought. Specifically, and as is the case with any research effort, but especially those dealing with any aspect of human behavior, it is ultimately extremely difficult—some would argue impossible—to isolate

the variables in any studies of teaching and learning in real classrooms with real teachers and students. Trying to determine the impact of remediation on student performance is extraordinarily difficult because so many other variables affect student performance: prior education, motivation, family circumstances, particular classroom experiences, specific kinds of remediation, and quality of instruction, among many others—the list goes on and on. This fundamental problem obviously affects my research, but the next paragraph addresses a technique with great promise for my study.

Control Group

As Henry Levin and Juan Calcagno highlight in their seminal study "Remediation in the Community College: An Evaluator's Perspective," there exist a multitude of factors to attempt to control for when conducting research on the effects of remediation. In one important example, trying to control for differences in the backgrounds of students taking or not taking remedial courses is quite important but very difficult because these backgrounds obviously heavily influence which students need to take these courses, and students who persevere to complete remedial courses are in many ways a self-selected group, as are those who do not complete these courses, so how is one to determine the effects of the remediation course itself (Levin 11) vs. the effects of the perseverance of those students who complete the course? Additionally, these researchers highlight the possible effects of two interesting phenomena: the Hawthorne effect, in which students may perform at a higher level simply because they know that they are part of an experiment, and the John Henry effect, in which students and instructors in traditional (non-remedial) courses attempt to demonstrate that they can out-perform the students in the experimental group.

In an attempt to control for such effects, a few studies—highlighted in Michal Kurlaender and Jessica Howell's report "College Remediation: A Review of the Causes and Consequences"—have focused on establishing one of the key factors lacking in so

many studies about remediation: a viable comparison (control) group (6). Specifically, this control group took the form of a group of students who did not take remediation courses because they scored just above the threshold required to take those courses (the "just above" group), as compared with those students who had to take remedial courses because they scored just beneath the threshold (the "just below" group). The researchers addressed in Kurlaender and Howell's report—Martorell and McFarlin in 2011, Calcagno & Long in 2008, Bettinger and Long in 2009, and Boatman and Long in 2010—found varying soon-to-be-discussed answers regarding the effectiveness of remediation, but the intriguing aspect of their research is that it attempted to isolate the key variable. That is, these researchers focused on groups of students who were similar to one another with respect to their academic backgrounds but who had one key difference: one group took remediation courses, and one group did not. Thus, the groundwork seemed to be in place to explore the impact of the remediation itself, after controlling for other key variables.

I gave this matter much thought after reading these studies and decided to use this kind of analysis as part of my quantitative data collection. As it turned out, examining the performance of those "Direct Admits" to West Point whose standardized scores and high school transcripts are very much in line with a similar group of students at USMAPS was quite illuminating regarding the English experience at USMAPS and turned out to be one of the most important parts of my research overall and arguably the most important part of my research that was based on quantitative data. That is, comparing the performance of a select group of USMAPS graduates—the "just below" group—with those Direct Admits with quite similar academic records—the "just above" group—went a long way toward examining the impact of a key difference between these groups that are in many ways quite similar to each other: the former spent a year in the USMAPS English program, while the latter did not.

The research technique of using two populations—one just above a certain threshold and one just below that threshold—to isolate a variable is surprisingly

apparently not addressed in research literature. In fact, extensive research and conversations with colleagues in departments across USMA about research done on the efficacy of this particular technique—"just above and just below"—revealed nothing in the literature that focused on exploring this technique of analysis itself. The previously mentioned studies discuss this technique in some detail as they lay out their methodology, but this discussion focuses entirely on how the technique was implemented, not on the strengths or weaknesses of the technique itself, and I was unable to find anything in the literature that analyzed this technique as a research methodology. However, from a conceptual and logical perspective, this research technique offers a great deal because it obviously attempts to control for variables in a population or populations being studied so that a variable of interest can be isolated as an independent variable and studied with respect to its impact on dependent variables. In my study, that key independent variable was the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students' performance in EN 101, the dependent variable. Ultimately, the "just above and just below" method of examining Direct Admits and USMAPS students with very similar records with respect to a variable shown to have high predictive value in forecasting performance in EN 101—SAT verbal scores—but with the key difference of taking or not taking USMAPS English led to a series of quite interesting and important results that are explained and analyzed in detail in Chapters Five and Six.

Other pieces of the literature deal with relatively technical, and certainly important, aspects of the difficulties inherent in conducting research about the efficacy of remediation. Unsurprisingly, a variety of researchers discuss in the literature topics such as selection bias, regression-discursive analysis, control groups, internal validity, reliability, and generalizability. What is important at this point in my research, though, is not so much the specific conclusions these researchers draw about these forms of statistical analysis but the fact that there exists a wide variety of ways to incorporate them into a research project in ways that will lend a research project greater credibility, at least

among researchers. Thus, when the time came to determine exactly how I would conduct my research, I turned to the same researchers I have been or will be citing –Attewell, Bailey, Bettinger, Calcagno, Lavin, Long, and Saxon, among others—for guidance regarding the fundamentals of good research techniques and followed much of that guidance when establishing and implementing my research, as explained in the Methods chapter of this dissertation.

Results of Assessments of Remediation's Efficacy

This sub-section of the efficacy section of remediation is in my mind the most important single part of this literature review because it directly addresses the most important part of that review: what are the results of studies and reports concerning the question of whether remediation works? This sub-section is based upon three main points: first, a number of researchers have voiced concern about the prospects of doing meaningful research about the efficacy of remediation because of the lack of available data related to this topic; second, some reports and studies about remediation's efficacy were disappointing in that they promised more than they delivered, while other reports and studies were of concern because of apparent inconsistencies or contradictions within them; third, and most importantly, these results range literally from one end of the efficacy spectrum to the other: remediation is clearly and strongly effective to remediation is not only completely ineffective but also actually counter-productive. Generally speaking, though, these results can be grouped into three camps for the purposes of analysis: remediation is ineffective; remediation is inconclusive; or remediation is effective. For reasons I discuss shortly, my fundamental conclusion concerning the literature regarding the results of remediation is that there exists such a bewildering array of reports and studies collectively supporting all three of these mutually contradictory positions that any given researcher can relatively easily find research to support or attack remediation to almost any degree imaginable. Ultimately,

even research that is clearly high quality in many respects—topic, methodology, and analysis—is still fundamentally problematic because of a combination of internal inadequacies or conflict with other studies of equal merit that arrive at markedly different conclusions. The following discussion is correlated to the three main points discussed at the beginning of this paragraph: data, disappointment, and the spectrum.

Data

Many studies of the effects of remediation have concluded that this field suffers from a shortage of data and an accompanying shortfall of effective research on this topic. In their 2008 study of remediation, Levin and Calcagno conclude, according to a Policy Report by Cindy Roper (2), that "Due to a dearth of available data as well as a variety of methodological issues, little concrete information is known about the effectiveness of remedial education." Based on many other reports that I read, though, as well as on my own experience conducting research about remediation, Levin and Calcagno's concern almost assuredly focuses on the "methodological issues" rather than "a dearth of available data." What I saw again and again in the literature was not that data was not available; rather, the underlying problem was the difficulty inherent in meaningfully analyzing that data, a problem I discussed in detail in the "Controls" sub-section of this chapter and will explore further in the upcoming "Concerns" sub-section.

Disappointment

In addition to this overarching contention that "much work remains to be done" with respect to gathering and analyzing data about remediation, an assertion that is understandable, given the complexity and importance of the topic, many researchers end up with results that are disappointing, given the titles and opening sections of their studies. For example, *The Role and Effect of Remedial Education in Two-Year Colleges* certainly has a promising title, and its authors, Eric Bettinger and Bridget Terry Long, are frequently cited by other researchers. Moreover, this study raises a number of very

important questions and is based on a relative wealth of data: comprehensive information about the Ohio community college system, one of the largest in America.

An in-depth analysis of this study, though, revealed that it unfortunately delivers much less than it seems to promise. First of all, two of its key conclusions—that students in remediation are more likely to withdraw from community colleges and are less likely to complete a degree in a timely manner because remediation is essentially ineffective (24)—do not account for the possibility that of course students needing remediation are more likely to withdraw from school or need more time to complete their degree; the challenges they face are precisely why they are in remediation in the first place, and these challenges make attaining their goal a riskier venture than for those students not facing these challenges. This aspect of this study with such a promising title is one that I saw surface again and again in report after report and study after study. Researchers would study a population of students, via a variety of methodologies—primarily observations, interviews, surveys, and a multitude of quantitative data—and learn a great deal about these students. However, when the time came to draw conclusions based on their data, findings, and analysis, every such finding was tainted by an inability to control for the variable: the effect, or lack thereof, of the remediation in question. For example, in Bettinger and Long's study, a simple footnote states that "data [placement scores] were not available" to make it possible to compare similar students attending the same school. This lack of arguably the key piece of data, one that would have allowed the researchers to compare similar students, casts a pall over the study because, again, it seems clear that students directed into remediation are much more likely to experience difficulty in school than students not so directed—because of the underlying reasons that caused the former group to be placed into remediation and the latter group not to be.

Secondly, another key conclusion—that remediation seems to discourage students at two-year colleges but not those at four-year colleges—is stated with very little supporting discussion. This flaw was quite surprising in a study that is in many ways of

high quality, but, after spending page after page discussing various facets of the data, the researchers concluded—based on no compelling data or analysis that I had seen, after having read the report several times—that students who undergo remediation at two-year colleges are more likely to face academic difficulties than are their counterparts at four-year schools. One clear-cut factor that might have accounted to some degree for this finding was that students in remediation at four-year schools were significantly more academically prepared than were their counterparts at two-year colleges, but I came across no discussion of this possibility. Moreover, there exists such a wide variety of reasons for this discrepancy in performance between students at two-year colleges and those at four-year colleges that an implied conclusion of this study—that remediation at two-year colleges is less effective than that at four-year colleges and as such should perhaps be eliminated or at least greatly modified—is not strongly enough supported to be seriously considered.

Even worse than a study that is disappointing, though, is one that apparently misinterprets studies—or at a minimum, does not respond to studies that disagree with its claims—or even contradicts itself. In The National Center for Developmental Education's *Remediation: Reports of Its Failure Are Greatly Exaggerated*, the report's title is self-explanatory. What is incomprehensible, then, is the list of studies this report includes as references because many of those studies do anything but agree with the title of this report. Some quotations from these references themselves are: "there are negative effects of remediation"; "we find negative effects [of remediation] for those students on the margins … and occasionally positive [effects of positives]; and "there is little rigorous evidence on the effectiveness of college remediation … [remediation] does not increase the completion of college-level credits or eventual degree completion." The author of this study clearly cannot believe that these reports support the position of his study, but unfortunately he does nothing to attempt to refute these contrary claims and should not have listed them as references if he was not going to address them. This study

was problematic and obviously played no role in directly assisting me with my research, but reading this study was enlightening and cautionary because of the surprising number of studies or reports in the literature with similar problems. Of course, these kinds of studies or reports are not even close to the quality of much research in the field—studies like Bettinger and Long's, which, despite its problems, was based on an enormous data set and contained a great deal of thoughtful analysis of that data—but their existence highlights the need for researchers to closely investigate what they read, for had I not looked up several of the references and read them myself, I never would have known that these references did not support the study in question.

The Spectrum

With respect to studies that conclude that remediation is ineffective—one of which, Bettinger and Long's *The Role and Effect of Remedial Education in Two Year Colleges*, has already been discussed above but in the context of delivering less than it promises—this review of the literature came across many with this conclusion. One possible explanation for the finding that remediation is not effective is that much remedial instruction uses the same techniques as the courses that preceded the remediation. Hence, it logically follows that if those courses were not effective, then the remedial ones will not be, either. This line of thought is presented in Arthur Berchin's report "Toward Increased Efficiency in Community College Courses" and initially seems plausible but becomes problematic when Berchin ultimately asserts that large, lecture hall classes can be very effective, which may be true but which needs much more explication than Berchin provides because he does not make any comparisons between the very effective teachers—by virtue of a combination of their engaging pedagogy and deep knowledge of the material—who sometimes teach remedial classes via large lecture classes and the ineffective teachers who all too often teach remedial classes as large-scale lectures (5-7). However, another study criticizing remedial instruction asserts that only 70% and 30% of

English and math remediation classes, respectively, are passed (Levin, 2), but the obvious rejoinder, here, would concern reasonable expectations regarding students mandated to remedial instruction. That is, given the possible starting points of the students in question and the challenges facing them in their daily lives, passing these remediation classes at 70% and 30% rates may very well be laudable.

A much more potent argument against remediation stems from proponents of eliminating remediation entirely. These advocates believe that remediation is a stumbling block to higher achievement, not a conduit. There exist many studies with this conclusion, but one of the most powerful, cogent cases of this sort that this review of the literature uncovered is *Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere* by Complete College America. This impassioned study addresses all of the familiar travails of remediation—it costs a great deal of time, money, and effort, without commensurate benefits because so many of its students never even finish remediation, much less attain an associate's or bachelor's degree—and ultimately contends that students who would normally be relegated to remediation be instead assigned to credit-bearing courses, with the very important caveat that they also receive additional support such as tutoring, smaller classes, and classes that occur over two semesters instead of one. This study does offer an impressive array of support, ranging from states that have aligned high school curricula and standardized testing much more closely with college entrance requirements, to states that are providing the tutoring, smaller classes, and longer duration classes already mentioned. With respect to this final point, though, supporters of remediation might reasonably contend that this study is actually not asserting that remediation is ineffective and that this study has not made the case that remediation is "a bridge to nowhere." These supporters of remediation could make this contention by claiming that this study is in effect supporting remediation but remediation in a different guise: that of a "co" requisite instead of a "pre" requisite. This point about "pre" vs. "co" requisite remediation has been discussed in an earlier section of this literature review, and it does

seem to be a strong counterargument to the claim the "remediation" is ineffective because it raises the possibility that remediation could take many forms—tutoring, smaller class sizes, and longer duration classes, among others—and that these forms are necessary kinds of support for many students that could occur before but also while they are taking college courses.

Another strong case against the effectiveness of remediation has been made by two seminal studies, both of which use the "just above/just below" control group methodology discussed earlier. The first of these studies is Juan Calcagno's 2007 "Evaluating the Impact of Developmental Education in Community Colleges: A Quasi-Experimental Regression Discontinuity." This study capitalized on the fact that Florida community colleges have discrete cut-off scores for students being enrolled in remediation and that these scores were available to researchers, and it used the scores of more than 25,000 students as the basis for its analysis. After detailed analysis of the performance of students who were in the "just above" and "just below" categories, Calcagno found that remedial courses had no positive effects on passing college-level courses, gaining certificates or associates degrees, or transferring to four-year colleges. The second of these studies is Paco Montorell and Isaac McFarlin's 2011 "Help or Hindrance? The Effects of Remediation on Academic and Labor Market Outcomes." This study used an impressive dataset of students in Texas—more than 250,000 two-year college students and almost 200,000 four-year college students, all of whom were subject to Texas's clearly established cut-off criteria for being enrolled in remediation—as well as the "just above/just below" methodology to examine the impact of remediation on those students in the "just above" and "just below" categories. After extensive analysis, Montorell and McFarlin found that remediation had a slightly negative impact on student performance with respect to "years of college completed, academic credits attempted, receipt of an academic degree, and labor market performance" (25).

These two impressive studies thus call into serious question the efficacy of remediation because these studies are seminal works in the field and hallmarks of high-level research with respect to methodology and analysis, and they find that, essentially, when controlled for via a variety of stringent methods and analyzed across an extensive dataset, remedial courses appear to not be beneficial to students, which of course calls into question their reason for existence; fundamentally, if remediation is not helping students, it is ineffective. However, as we will soon see, other studies—just as impressive as these two—have arrived at diametrically opposed results regarding the efficacy of remediation. Additionally, as we will see in Chapter Five of this dissertation, studies with results that initially seem to strongly indicate one thing—in the case of my research project, that USMAPS English was not adding value to its students' performance in EN 101—do not withstand closer scrutiny with respect to the confidence one can have in their conclusions.

Many studies have essentially concluded that there is simply no meaningful way to determine the overall efficacy of remediation with any degree of confidence; that is, these studies have concluded that the results of remediation are simply inconclusive because some aspects of remediation seem to be helpful while others appear not to be. For example, Henry Levin & J. Calcagno's 2008 influential study "The Impact of Postsecondary Remediation Using a Regressive Discontinuity Approach" found that while remediation helps students attain more credits, complete more college courses, and transfer from two-year to four-year colleges at higher rates, it does not support their attainment of completing their degrees. This study was based on records of more than 100,000 Florida students and again used the "just above/just below" methodology to attempt to isolate the variable of remediation's impact on student performance.

In addition to this study, a variety of reports and studies, albeit much less ambitious in scope and rigorous in methodology, reached this same conclusion: remediation seems to help some students in some ways but not help other students in other ways. These

studies range from the National Governors' Association's "Strategies for Improving Remedial Education" to Michael Wardell's "A New Paradigm for Remediation" to the Charles A. Dana Center's "Core Principles for Transforming Remedial Education," and they all found that remediation had such widely varying impacts upon students' attainment of credits, persistence in college, transference from two-year to four-year colleges, and attainment of a certificate or degree that one must conclude that the overall impact of remediation is inconclusive. Of course, the conclusion that the results of remediation are ultimately inconclusive is not in and of itself problematic—many times, realizing that a conclusion simply cannot be reasonably drawn is an extremely important realization. However, from the point of view of a researcher attempting to determine the efficacy of remediation in general or of a particular program—USMAPS English, for example—this kind of conclusion is clearly cause for concern and unfortunately adds to the incredibly diffuse nature of research about the efficacy of remediation.

Despite the many studies and reports that have concluded either that remediation is ineffective or that its results are at best ultimately inconclusive, a number of studies have concluded, with varying degrees of support and analysis, that remediation does indeed work, and these studies offer a number of claims regarding how or why or when remediation is effective, or at least under what conditions it tends to be successful. With respect to shorter, less ambitious but still credible studies and reports, we find articles like William Tierney's "Ending Remediation is the Wrong Answer" that claim that remediation works and offer examples of how to meld different kinds of remediation together for maximal effectiveness. Additionally, Hunter Boylan's "Exploring Alternatives to Remediation" argues—despite its title—that remediation is often necessary and frequently successful, especially for students most in need of additional support. Moreover, the author of "Student Success Courses at the Community College" asserts that many community colleges have had great success with courses that focus on study habits and even life skills (O'Gara 3)—two kinds of remediation not discussed at

length in much of the literature—and, finally, the five texts addressed in the Overview to the Remediation section of this literature review—by McCabe, Berry, Haycock, Rose, and Houston—all contend that remediation is effective and should be continued and expanded.

In addition to these worthy but less rigorous texts, a number of lengthy, quite rigorous studies have been done, all of which conclude that remediation is certainly effective. Two of the most influential of these studies are Hunter Boylan and D. Patrick Saxon's 2005 "What Works in Remediation: Lessons from 30 Years of Research and Bettinger and Long's 2005 "Addressing the Needs of Under-prepared Students in Higher Education: Does College Remediation Work?" The first of these two reports is an exhaustive examination of more than six hundred seminal works in the field of remediation that were completed during a thirty year period from 1975-2005. This study did not use the "just above/just below" analytic technique to study a given population of students. Rather, it is a comparative "study of studies" that relies on careful, close analysis of the results of other studies for the conclusions that it draws. As a result of their insightful analysis of much of the most important important work that had been done in remediation, Boylan and Saxon conclude that there are indeed several remediation strategies and techniques that have been shown to increase student performance: clearly specified goals/objectives for remediation courses; mastery learning; structured, centralized, strongly coordinated remediation curricula within and among schools; learning communities; integration of critical thinking requirements; and highly trained tutors. These kinds of conclusions are of course subject to objections about controlling for the variable in question—the impact of remediation—but the authors, via a wealth of strongly argued passages, make a convincing case that these strategies and techniques have been demonstrably effective types of remediation.

While Bettinger and Long's 2003 study "The Role and Effect of Remedial Education…" has already been lauded but also criticized in a previous section of this

literature review, their 2005 study "Addressing the Needs of Under-prepared Students in Higher Education…" is a hallmark of cogent, powerful research. This report, unlike the 2003 report, uses the "just above/just below" methodology, with great effect. In their 2005 report, the authors examine the records of more than 28,000 two-year and four-year college students in Ohio and conclude that remediation definitively increased students' "persistence"—the length of time they continued their studies—which led to a marked increase of 10% in the rate at which they graduated. Moreover, with respect to graduation from four-year schools, Bettinger and Long discovered that "[s]tudents who received remediation in math were over 15% more likely to complete a college degree in four years. Those in English remediation were 9% more likely to do so…," meaning that not only did remediation help students ultimately graduate—in whatever length of time—it led to an increase in students at "four year" colleges earning their degrees in four years, a trend that has unfortunately not been the case among many groups of students, who often require five, six, or even more years to graduate.

While all of the discussed studies and reports concluding that remediation is effective have significant strengths, they all suffer from the same problems afflicting the discussed studies and reports concluding that remediation is ineffective or at best inconclusive. That is, the studies lauding remediation still suffer from some combination of simply not being particularly rigorous—for example, the shorter studies included in the beginning part of the section on remediation's effectiveness—or from not effectively isolating the variable in question—the problem in Boylan and Saxon's otherwise impressive "What Works in Remediation"—or from not fully accounting for possible variables even when the variable in question seemed to be isolated well, as was the case in Bettinger and Long's 2005 study. Even in this last study, and as discussed in connection with Montorell and McFarlin's study, attempting to isolate the variable of the impact of remediation via using the "just above/just below" method is no guarantee that the resultant conclusions are legitimate.

Concerns Regarding Studies of Remediation's Efficacy

At this point in my review of the literature about postsecondary remediation, three major points manifest themselves. First, there has been a tremendous amount of research and writing done about postsecondary remediation; literally thousands of texts on this topic exist. Second, much of this research and writing has been done in an interesting, and sometimes very powerful, manner but in a manner which simply has not accounted for the myriad of variables that might have affected whatever results the authors put forth. Third, of the apparently rigorous studies done on the topic of post-secondary remediation—studies by Calcagno & Long, Boylan & Saxon, Bettinger & Long, and others—even these studies, many of which have impressive titles and are undoubtedly the result of thousands of hours of intelligent, sincere work, have important flaws, most of which stem from an inability to isolate key variables or from overreaching or underwhelming conclusions.

Fundamentally, with respect to these three conclusions, a difficult, challenging situation exists regarding research about post-secondary remediation. Studies generally fall into two categories: those that are relatively superficial and rely upon straightforward but simplistic comparisons and those that are the result of intense, painstaking data collection and analysis. However, both kinds of studies—as well as studies falling between these extremes—suffer from two systemic flaws: a lack of internal reliability and/or external consistency. Every study I read and analyzed, even the seminal ones by highly regarded researchers such as Boylan, Calcagno, Bettinger, Levin, Long, and others, ultimately was not able to isolate the variable in question—the effect of remediation—in any kind of manner that would definitively establish the conclusion(s) of the study in question. Additionally, every study reaching any given conclusion—remediation is ineffective, remediation in effective, or remediation is in some ways effective but in other ways ineffective—was offset by some other study reaching contradictory conclusions. Indeed, sometimes even the same researchers—most notably

Bettinger and Long—arrive at different conclusions regarding the efficacy of remediation, depending upon when they performed the study, what data were available, and how they analyzed that data. When I began this journey of reviewing the literature surrounding post-secondary remediation, I expected to find disagreement among researchers, but I did not realize just how difficult it would be to actually isolate the variable of the effect of remediation, nor did I realize that there would be so many studies disagreeing with one another on the fundamental question of whether remediation works.

These difficulties do not cast any aspersions on the character of the researchers involved, all of whom are undoubtedly earnest, passionate individuals; instead, these problems simply but profoundly reflect the fact that research of this nature is exceedingly difficult to conduct. Ultimately, my journey through the welter of research literature regarding post-secondary remediation has revealed that there simply does not exist any kind of consensus regarding whether remediation works. Some authors claim with varying degrees of support that it does, and some claim with varying degrees of support that it does not, but not one of the authors I came across by virtue of reading more than one hundred texts on this topic presented a compelling case for his or her conclusions regarding remediation, especially when this body of literature is considered as a whole.

Transition from Remediation to English Education

I will mark the shift from the literature on remediation to that on English or, more broadly, literacy education by discussing a book by one of the most widely influential, yet most polarizing and controversial figures in the modern history of discourse about literacy: E.D. Hirsch, who had established himself as a leading literary theorist and even a composition theorist before he became a central figure in the reading wars of the late 20th century. The book that I found indispensable to my own thinking about the task of preparing our USMAP students for the literacy demands of West Point is Hirsch's book

with the provocative title of *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*. In spite of Hirsch's status as the scholar of literacy most vilified by and most contemptuous of the community of scholars associated with NCTE (see Elbow, *What is English*), I found his book on the failure of American schools to be incisive, impressively well researched, particularly thoughtful, and of enormous relevance to my own research project.

Hirsch makes many points in this text, but his main message is that policies designed to help disadvantaged students are in actuality harming those students by not challenging them, not giving them the knowledge they need to not only survive but also thrive in an increasingly competitive workforce, and ultimately not considering them to be individuals worthy of society's best efforts. Given that the majority of the student body at USMAPS is comprised of minorities and that the mission of USMAPS is to prepare its students for success at a particularly rigorous college, Hirsch's claims obviously caught my attention.

With respect to the assessment dimension of my project and my attempt to assess how well USMAPS prepares its students for English instruction at West Point, *The Schools We Need* offered a great deal to consider. The most relevant of Hirsch's points focus on four concepts: intellectual capital, "localism," the link between intellectual capital and higher-order thinking, and what he calls "test aversion." Regarding the first of these concepts, intellectual capital is the term that Hirsch uses for the knowledge that students should have at their fingertips in order to effectively pursue their education. He makes a persuasive case that much of this knowledge is imparted to middle- and upper-class children via their home lives—through books in the house, conversations with well-educated parents, etc.—but that many disadvantaged children start school with a serious deficit of this intellectual capital because so many of them do not receive it at home, and this deficit grows each year because of the cumulative nature of learning as well as the generally poor schools they attend. At USMAPS, I have witnessed this kind of deficit in

many of my students, specifically in the form of a weak vocabulary, shallow to almost nonexistent reservoir of literary and historical knowledge, and tradition of attending weak high schools. One of the primary goals of the English program at USMAPS, as described in this study's "Context," is to rectify these shortcomings, and my research has investigated the results of these efforts.

Much of the damage that Hirsch believes is inflicted by our schools comes about as a result of what he calls "localism." This term refers to the tendency for our education system to be atomized as a result of the belief that local communities can best determine what their students need to know and how they should be taught this knowledge. I have always been amazed—aghast, really—at this mindset because it has always seemed to me that, with respect to fundamental concepts such as reading, writing, and quantitative skills, there is a readily ascertainable set of these skills that really should be "common knowledge" for students, regardless of whether they happen to attend school in Mississippi or Massachusetts, or, more generally, in a wealthy, well-resourced school district or a tragically deficient one such as those categorized in Jonathon Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*. Again, in my classroom, I have witnessed the extraordinary range of preparation that my students manifest, and much of that range seems to stem simply from the locality where they attended school, not the attitude, desire, or character of the students involved. Many of my students have told me things like "I have not studied grammar since the fifth grade"; "I have never written a paper longer than two pages"; and "I have not read a single one of the great works of literature you asked us about in class"; while others have attended high schools that required them to do all of these things, and more. With respect to the former group of students, I certainly did not blame them—nor does Hirsch—for these deficiencies in their schooling; indeed, I admired them for being so forthcoming with respect to their educational background. At USMAPS, one of our goals is to move students well beyond the problems stemming from this "localism" that

Hirsch addresses, and my research has examined the degree to which USMAPS has succeeded at that goal.

On a related note, Hirsch makes a strong case for the link between intellectual capital and the ability to conduct higher-order thinking. He provides a number of examples, with respect to quantitative as well as verbal skills, to support his claim that in order to most efficiently perform higher-order skills such as writing sophisticated essays and solving complicated word problems, students must have at their disposal a basic body of knowledge that they access essentially automatically while thinking. Again, I have experienced how a lack of these basic skills inhibits students from performing as well as possible—for example, while grading in-class essays that did not allow students to access the Internet and seeing the difficulty some of them had with coming up with evidence or examples that seemed to me to be common knowledge—and a significant portion of the USMAPS curriculum is focused on enabling students to develop this kind of knowledge. Latter stages of this curriculum require students to put this knowledge to work, but, of course, the real test for how much students have learned at USMAPS occurs when they move to USMA, and my research has focused on this link between what students learn in USMAPS English and how they perform in EN 101.

To examine Hirsch's claims about needing knowledge to do higher-order thinking, one must first examine what higher-order thinking is and then consider what role knowledge might play in this kind of thinking. As Hirsch says in his text and as I have seen manifested in my classroom, schoolwork in general and English in general involve a myriad of different skills, a hierarchy of sorts. With respect to writing, I have always found, and as I explained in the "academic writing" section of the "Context" chapter, that students enter my classroom able to write reasonably good narrative and descriptive essays but unable to write satisfactory argumentative essays, which always involve some combination of analysis, evaluation, and development of a position. Reasons for this discrepancy are undoubtedly many, but students often characterize the former categories

of writing as "easy" and the latter as "hard," a distinction that I believe arises because the first category involves very different kinds of skills than those of the second category. This is not to say that narratives and descriptions are unimportant; rather, it is to say that students, including myself, very often find it easier to write them than to write argumentative essays that involve—as James Moffett shows us in *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*—evidentiary reasoning and the more abstract thinking entailed in generalizing from instances and in analysis and synthesis. Thus, in USMAPS English, the faculty made the decision two years ago to decrease the number of narrative and descriptive essays that students wrote and increase the number of argumentative essays students wrote, and my Chapter Five analysis of these students' performance in EN 101 strongly suggests that this decision was quite well founded.

With respect to Hirsch's claim that "knowledge" is necessary for higher-order thinking, he explains that this knowledge consists essentially of facts and experiences that are relevant to the higher-order thinking task at hand. He also says that, generally speaking, children raised in lower-income homes have less of this kind of knowledge at their disposal than do children in higher-income homes because of the broader range of experiences inside and out of the home that the latter group has compared to the former group. This claim by Hirsch is one that I have again seen manifested in my own classroom. During the course of the semester, I meet with every student at least four times for intensive, one-on-one conferences about an upcoming paper; additionally, I conduct additional instruction—"AI"—sessions on an almost daily basis for students who want additional assistance. Over the past two decades of having this kind of interactions with students, I have noticed that the breadth and depth of my students' background "knowledge" has varied considerably from student to student, and the extent of that knowledge directly impacted students' ability to generate and develop ideas for their essays.

Those with more extensive knowledge that related to the assignments in question—generally speaking, knowledge of history, politics, geography, science, literature, and current events, among others—were able to draw upon that knowledge for their essays, most of which dealt with these kinds of topics, while those with more circumscribed knowledge often had trouble starting their papers and/or developing them. I realize that the nature of the assignments could be called into question in the sense of privileging certain kinds of knowledge—history, politics, geography—that favored certain types of students—middle to upper class students, for example—but the mission of West Point is to produce commissioned officers who will serve around the world in an environment awash with history and politics, so it stands to reason that reading and writing assignments should focus upon these kinds of topics. Moreover, in the end, and of ultimate importance, students in my class with all kinds of backgrounds—ethnic, racial, geographic, class—were able to develop solid to excellent papers, but the group with the greater starting knowledge had an easier time of the process than did the group that lacked this foundational knowledge.

This experience has caused me to stress to my students year after year that reading is their aperture onto the wider world and that they should avail themselves of every opportunity to broaden their horizons, whether through the assigned readings or ones they do on their own. Additionally, as my account of my classroom shows, I discuss the link between knowledge and higher-order thinking with them in order to inspire them to take advantage of not only reading opportunities but also cultural opportunities afforded them by virtue of being at the Military Academy and being only fifty miles from America's greatest metropolis. For example, Cadets are required in some instances or simply encouraged in others to avail themselves of learning opportunities such as attending lectures by world-renowned authors, political leaders, and entertainers—people such as Toni Morrison, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and Tom Brokaw—or, even better, participating in small-group interactions such as round-table discussions with people of similar stature,

and almost every weekend, groups of cadets travel to New York City to take advantages of opportunities to attend lectures and talks at venues such as the Council on Foreign Relations or visit cultural icons such as the Museum of Natural History or Metropolitan Art Museum. Furthermore, this link between knowledge and higher-order thinking manifested itself in key parts of the research I did for this study, research that I will address in detail when I analyze my findings regarding what seemed to be counterintuitive findings regarding the "just above/just below" control group in my study.

Finally, Hirsch devotes an entire chapter of *The Schools We Need* to what he terms "test aversion." For a wide variety of reasons, standardized tests are controversial. While I have not done enough research on this topic to be intimately familiar with the various arguments posed for and against standardized testing, as I explain in my "Context" chapter at some length, I do know that some studies have shown there to be a very weak correspondence between performance in the classroom and performance on standardized tests, while others have shown a strong correspondence in this area. Personally, I have seen a relatively strong correlation between standardized test scores and quality of work. That is, while I fully realize that there are many variables in the relationship between standardized test scores and quality of work in the classroom, my strongest readers and writers have tended to be those students with higher standardized test scores, and vice-versa. The good news here, though, is that while the this relationship between standardized test scores and quality of work in the classroom has existed on a general level in my classroom, the vast majority of students who entered my class with lower test scores developed into solid or in some cases excellent writers, a result that was very beneficial for the students and gratifying for me.

Interestingly enough, I have also witnessed during my five years at USMAPS a number of my students who have significantly raised their SAT scores—in some cases by almost 200 points on the Writing or Critical Reading portion of the test alone—and my observation is that they accomplished this goal not simply because they became familiar

with the format of the test but rather because they had increased their knowledge almost exponentially during our first semester and had indeed become not only more "knowledgeable" about the topics at hand but also better thinkers, in general. Because I had access to a great deal of data regarding standardized test scores and grades for USMAPS students—both while at USMAPS and later, as cadets at USMA—I examined this information carefully and analyzed it in such a way that enabled me to draw reasonable conclusions about the relationship between Cadet Candidates' standardized scores and their performance in the classroom at USMAPS and West Point, and I present this analysis in Chapters Five and Six of this dissertation.

Seminal Texts in English Education: Loban, Rosenblatt, Rose, Moffett, Britton, Hartwell, and Sullivan & Tinberg

From a quite controversial person in the field of English education, I turn now to a small group of authors and studies that are widely revered in my home discipline of English education and who have also had a shaping influence on my thinking in this study and on the larger project of constructing an effective college preparatory program for USMAPS students that is the focus of my study. In addition to situating my project within the history of English education, my review of several of the seminal texts that have shaped the field of English education literature provided me a much stronger contextual understanding of my project by enabling me to more clearly understand much of the history behind the remediation literature I included in this literature review.

Walter Loban's *Language Development: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*

This monumental text was one of the most interesting and important of the works I read on the topic of reading as well as writing. This work is one of the most important I read because it offers profound insights—insights I explain below— into not only how to conduct field research but also how to insightfully analyze that research, two areas that

were of obvious importance to my project. Additionally, the sheer scope of the project is breathtaking: thirteen years, more than two hundred students involved in the study from their kindergarten year all the way through their senior year, and thousands of hours of transcriptions and analysis.

Concerning its relationship to my project with USMAPS and USMA, Loban's work offers two particularly powerful findings. The first of these concerns Loban's observation that the composition of his high-performing, low-performing, and randomized groups stayed relatively constant throughout his study. This finding was on the one hand not surprising but on the other hand alarming, in that it would seem to offer little hope for disadvantaged children or, more specifically, for students like those who attend USMAPS: those who offer the Academy a great deal with respect to diversity, athletics, or leadership but who enter USMAPS academically deficient and in what he would call the "low-performing" group. However, a key point in Loban's study is that the students in his study never moved out of their "home environment," whereas all students at USMAPS could not be more different in this regard because they leave their "home environment"—which, based on what many of my students have told me, was often characterized by under-resourced schools, stressful home lives, and negative peer groups—and enter a regimented and disciplined, but also caring, challenging, and uplifting environment, with clearly positive results.

Loban's second insight concerns a stance that resonated a great deal with me, due to some long-held feelings of mine regarding the generalizability of qualitative research as well as to the fact that I was about to embark upon my dissertation research shortly after reading his work. While completely understanding the need for qualification and nuance regarding any kind of research—including strictly quantitative studies—I have found it frustrating to so often read or be told that research, especially qualitative research, is of only limited applicability in its findings because its results cannot be "generalized" to populations beyond those of the study itself. In my mind, this kind of

unnecessarily restrictive belief about the generalizability and applicability of research, while necessary to some degree because the world is a complex place and researchers must do their best to account for that complexity with respect to the applicability of their research, needlessly hamstrings the profound impact that much qualitative research could have. Philosophers from Plato to Descartes to contemporary leaders in the field of education have vigorously debated the epistemological aspects of this question and will undoubtedly continue to do so, but what I like to think of as "common sense" often seems to be left by the wayside. Thus, I found it refreshing and stimulating that Loban clearly states that the purpose of his research was to gather data in a longitudinal study that could indeed be used to *draw conclusions about and formulate policy regarding any population of students in urban schools* [italics added]; that is, the purpose of his research was to attempt to arrive at generalizable conclusions, a purpose that he attained with admirable results, even if some of those results—e.g., the ones regarding the progress of students from one general achievement level to a higher level—were at first glance at odds with my hopes and expectations. This kind of bold pronouncement by Loban—that is, his claim that his research is indeed applicable to schools and populations far beyond the confines of his study—played a key role in my willingness to make the kinds of far-reaching, generalizable claims I do in the "Conclusions and Recommendations" chapter of my study.

Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration*

With respect to the portion of my study dealing with reading, I could not have begun with anything better than Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* because this text has so much to offer regarding helping students develop into stronger readers. Specifically, her assertions regarding why reading should be taught, the transactional vs. interactional nature of reading, and the necessary vs. sufficient aspects of reading directly impacted my study and the manner in which the USMAPS English curriculum has

developed during the past three years. Regarding the two pillars of that curriculum—critical reading and argumentative essay writing—I have found that it is actually easier to help students improve their ability to write a competent, even fairly sophisticated argumentative essay than it is to enable them to markedly improve their reading comprehension because the ability to write a competent argumentative essay involves a number of skills—such as developing strong thesis statements and topic sentences in an essay organized in a conventional introduction, body, conclusion format—which most students can readily grasp relatively quickly, whereas the latter ability requires much more effort spread across a longer time period, a situation which is problematic, given the foundational importance of critical reading. Thus, one of the major areas of emphasis during the past three summers' comprehensive USMAPS English curriculum revision process has been an attempt to make our students stronger readers, and one of the key areas of my research was determining the outcome of that attempt. Assessing the results of this emphasis on critical reading is a difficult task, but my research of our students' performance at USMAPS and in their first two years at USMA has revealed that many of our students have markedly enhanced their critical reading skills during their time at USMAPS and that the general level of reading comprehension of those students has risen in a statistically significant manner—and much of the impetus for this exploration of our students' reading ability and the way we teach reading stems directly from what Rosenblatt has to say about reading, as explained in the paragraphs below.

In *Literature as Exploration*, Rosenblatt takes what is an initially surprising approach but one that turns out to be what makes her work so powerful: discussing not simply how to teach and read literature but also explaining why one should teach and read literature and, by implication, why one should read anything at all. Perhaps the most valuable benefit Rosenblatt considers to be a result of reading, especially reading literature, is the broadening of horizons it brings about, the endless possibilities it raises in the minds of readers who otherwise would have had no thoughts whatsoever about

these aspects of what life has to offer. These possibilities are obviously even more important to the disadvantaged in society because they are the ones with horizons circumscribed by socioeconomic and other straits. Because many of the students at USMAPS come from such circumstances, Rosenblatt's words resonated particularly loudly as I read them, and, while it is difficult to determine the extent to which exposing our students to literature impacts them on a personal level or in terms of their performance at USMA, I learned that the journeys we take in the classroom on the wings of the literature we read and study together do indeed help students. I learned about this impact through what many of my students have written in their course-end feedback—open-ended feedback that was anonymous and provided at the end of the course, with no relationship to the grades they received—regarding the impact literature had on them, and it was Rosenblatt's words regarding the ability of literature to have this kind of effect that made me integrate this part of the literary experience into students' feedback about USMAPS English. Moreover, based on the very positive feedback I have received from my students regarding Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and on so much of the research about this topic I have read, as well as my own experiences in this context as a teacher and student, I am certain that the literature we have our students read should be—and will be—very inclusive of multi-genre, culturally sensitive texts, a topic I address in detail in the "Context" chapter of this dissertation.

Two other aspects of *Literature as Exploration* played important roles in what I decided to explore in my research project and with respect to how we think about teaching reading: Rosenblatt's account of a transactional vs. an interactional relationship between reader and work, and her analysis of what she calls "necessary" vs. "sufficient" ways of reading. With respect to the former, Rosenblatt states that a transactional relationship between reader and work involves each changing the other in a series of mutually reinforcing exchanges, while an interactional relationship involves only a relationship between two essentially fixed or static entities. In our classrooms at

USMAPS, we of course hope that our students will have transactional relationships with their readings, but it was not until reading Rosenblatt that I could articulate this important difference in this manner and discuss it at length with the English faculty with respect to how we teach reading. Regarding my research project, I carefully considered this concept of transactional vs. interactional reading while determining how to structure and analyze my interviews with former USMAPS students, and their answers revealed that they believe that their reading at USMAPS was indeed transactional, a finding that was quite rewarding but that I probably would not even have realized was present in their answers had I not contemplated this concept as a result of reading *Literature as Exploration.*

When one hears the terms "necessary" and "sufficient," one often thinks back to basic reasoning lessons one picked up somewhere along the way; in my class, I often initially describe this relationship to my students by highlighting the role a battery plays in starting a car: necessary, but not sufficient. In this context, Rosenblatt asserts that while it is necessary to give students the freedom to develop transactional relationships with texts, such relationships will normally only be sufficient for meaningful reading if guidance as well as freedom is part of the equation. This claim that readers must have freedom but that it is also necessary to provide them with guidance, along with the evidence Rosenblatt provides to support her claim, goes a long way to assuage any fears her readers may have that she is advocating an "anything goes" style of reading and interpretation.

With respect to teaching reading at USMAPS and examining the results of that teaching via my research project, Rosenblatt's comments were powerful stimuli to discuss teaching reading in great detail during summer curriculum development workshops and to vigorously look for the impact of that teaching while doing my research. Faculty discussions about how to best teach reading were unsurprisingly spirited because of the wide variety of ways to teach reading that exist as well as the wide range of feelings about those ways, but those discussions were wonderfully informed by

Rosenblatt's ideas about finding the right balance between freedom and direction. Additionally, when developing my research project, Rosenblatt's ideas about the proper balance between guidance and freedom made me cognizant of that key concept while conducting and analyzing my interviews, and they prompted me to explore in detail the results of our students' reading progress, a process I discuss in detail in Chapters Four, Five, and Six of this dissertation.

Mike Rose, *Lives on the Boundary*

Given its purpose and the arc of its narrative, Rose's widely influential book is one of the most important studies ever produced of the central problem addressed by my dissertation: the problem of how to foster the development of academically and culturally under-prepared students for the academic, intellectual, and literate culture of the university community, especially a university and community as idiosyncratic and demanding as West Point. Rose's personal story captures the essence of what seems to be the experience of many disadvantaged youth who overcome obstacle after obstacle on their way to success, but while that aspect of his story is uplifting, it was the connections I was able to make between his story and education in general—and, more importantly, with USMAPS in particular—that made his book such a useful part of my review of the literature.

In *Lives on the Boundary*, Rose offers many thoughts of relevance to those involved in remediation and additional preparation, but four stand out as especially applicable to USMAPS. The first of these concerns the power of narrative. While the focus of almost all writing at USMA is on argumentative essays—and while one can make a strong case, as I attempt to do in Chapter Two, that that focus is spot-on—reading Rose's book reinforced to me how powerful narrative can be, as well. Moreover, after almost twenty years of teaching at USMA and USMAPS, many of the best, most powerful essays I have read have been narratives, in large part, I believe, because this

type of writing tends to elucidate deeply felt reactions from its authors. Thus, based on Rose's book itself as well as what it offers regarding how narrative can engage students and my very positive experience regarding student narratives, it is time for both USMA and USMAPS to re-examine the almost sole emphasis they place on "argumentative essay" writing to determine if narratives can have an helpful role in the reading and writing programs of both institutions.

Mike Rose, through good fortune and a great deal of hard work, turned himself into a fine writer, and his ability to turn a phrase is especially noteworthy. One such group of phrases that is quite captivating focuses on how to categorize students; Rose asserts that students should be "shaped, not slotted" and that teachers should "foster," not "categorize" the youngsters in their charge. With respect to the Prep School mission, these words are powerful because they get to the heart of what USMAPS does: attempt to help almost two-hundred fifty young men and women each year, whose experiences and abilities vary quite widely, realize their potential as scholars and leaders. This attempt is aided much more by attitudes characterized by the first word in both of the aforementioned pairs, not the second.

On a similar note, Rose makes a strong case, via his experience as a student and a professor, that teachers can oftentimes be more effective if they act as "encouragers" instead of "critics." This point rang true with me because I often find myself trying to walk this line, and I believe I tend to err on the side of "critic," without fully realizing the power that encouragement can provide. This tension is a difficult one to resolve, but it is definitely one worth considering, especially given the mission of USMAPS, and I will keep this point in mind when our next academic year begins. Based on much of the student feedback I have received, most of my students deeply appreciate receiving detailed feedback about their essays. However, even though they have not complained about the tone of that feedback, I am confident that providing that feedback in a candid but always positive way will be most helpful to them. Additionally, in my role as

Director of the English Department, I am ultimately responsible for ensuring that all of the English faculty interact with students in a professional manner, and Rose's words about the power of encouragement are ones that I have shared with the faculty and that will serve as touchstones for all of us.

Of clear relevance to my project are Rose's comments regarding the relationship between remediators and academic departments. His experiences at UCLA showed him that all too often this relationship was not nearly tight enough, much to the detriment of both parties and, most importantly, the student. Busy people have to constantly battle the temptation to "stovepipe" their interests and energies, and I have witnessed this phenomenon many times during my more than thirty years in the workforce. Moving from Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey to West Point has made it much easier for USMAPS and USMA to have a more efficient working relationship with each other, but the challenge has been to translate that geographical proximity into substantive gains. While this study will not gauge the progress of this relationship, future studies of mine will examine this topic—an effort worth making in order to determine whether being on the same piece of terrain fosters better coordination between the two institutions and ultimately a better education for Cadet Candidates.

James Moffet, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*

Soon after beginning Moffett's *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, I felt as if I were reading the composition of one of the most intelligent authors I had ever come across. I was amazed at the dexterity Moffett demonstrates in handling everything from extremely detailed accounts of various aspects of grammar, usage, lexicon, etc. to highly perceptive observations regarding overarching issues such as a curriculum appropriate for the entire elementary and secondary system of education in America. With respect to being relevant to my project, Moffett provides insight into three key areas: the categories

of composition, the close connection between writing and talking, and the claim that the K-12 curriculum should be completely restructured.

For as long as I can recall, composition had always been presented to me as consisting of four categories: narrative, description, exposition, and persuasion. Moffett essentially follows the parameters of these groupings when he discusses the various types of writings, but he shows how these different types of discourse represent different levels and kinds of thinking on a scale of "abstractive amplitude" and reclassifies them under the convenient and homely labels of "what is happening, what happened, what happens, and what may happen." In terms of how we teach composition at the Prep School, I want to investigate somehow incorporating these categories into our instruction because I believe doing so will help our students better envision what they are actually doing and what is demanded of them intellectually when they write different types of essays. Additionally, Moffett's thoughts about the different kinds of written discourse heavily impacted the thoughts I include in this study's "Context" study about the nature of academic writing because his thoughts made me much more carefully consider this nature than I ever had, with the result that I was able to more clearly articulate my own thoughts about the importance of argumentative writing in the USMA and USMAPS English curricula.

Probably the most interesting aspect of *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* is Moffett's discussion of the relationship between talking and writing. Prior to reading Moffett, I had not given much thought to that topic, and reflecting upon Moffett's observation that "writing always follows talk" led to something of an epiphany. Interestingly, I was "talking" with one of my colleagues last year about various pedagogical practices, and he informed me that he often has students read aloud in class because he has found that reading aloud teaches his students much about writing with respect to syntax, grammar, usage, etc. His experience has been that such reading helps his students pick up the natural rhythms of the language—in this case, Standard

English—and its accompanying grammar and word flow, and he tries to incorporate this practice into his classroom fairly frequently, a practice I tried this past year with positive results, based on what I heard and read and on student feedback about this practice. Additionally, this emphasis on talk made me look much more closely—during my research—at requirements for talk in USMA and USMAPS English curricula and consider how those requirements might or might not be facilitating student development in those courses.

Over the years, I have read many proposals for various kinds of curricula in the K-12 system, but Moffett's proposal for a complete restructuring of our nation's elementary, middle, and high school curriculum based on his levels of abstraction was by far the most ambitious, intriguing of those proposals. Essentially, Moffett's proposal involves doing away with traditional subjects, even ones normally considered to be foundational, such as English and mathematics, and replacing them with instruction based on different modes of thought that combine various cognitive skills. As an English faculty, we have not discussed this kind of restructuring at all, but it is certainly an intriguing idea worth discussing, and being cognizant of the possibility of a radically different approach to coursework during my research caused me to consider our English curriculum and syllabi in ways I would not have had I been unaware of Moffett's thoughts on these topics. Specifically, I looked at past USMA and USMAPS English curricula with a much more nuanced eye regarding the possibility of radical restructurings of those curricula, and, while that investigation did not directly impact my study, it did make me a more careful investigator, in ways that I highlight in Chapter Five when I provide my examination of the impact of the restructured USMAPS English curriculum on its students' performance in EN 101.

James Britton et al., *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)*

In *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)*, author James Britton and a number of colleagues discuss their findings resulting from an exhaustive—and, to be sure, exhausting—study of several thousand pieces of writing from children ages 11-18 who were students at more than fifty schools. In Britton's work, two areas were of particular interest to my USMAPS experience and research project: the group's thoughts regarding the level of detail which teachers should use to guide the structure of their students' writing, and what Britton characterizes as writing done for "the teacher as examiner" vs. "expressive writing."

Regarding the level of guidance teachers should provide to their students regarding their writing, after I had taught composition for a year or two at West Point, I realized that almost every one of my sections (classes) followed a predictable pattern regarding what mistakes it would make in organizing and writing its papers. Thus, in an attempt to head off these problems before they occurred, I developed an "Essay Tips Sheet" that provided my students with a fairly detailed discussion of how they should organize their essays and what the essential elements of each section should be, along with specific guidelines regarding frequent sources of correctness and usage problems such as commas, agreement, fused and fragmentary sentences, among others. I quickly learned that the quality of the papers from those students receiving these "tips" was clearly better than the sections I had taught that had not received that guidance, and I do not believe that that perception was simply a result of my wanting to believe that my guidance had helped my students write better papers. The fact was that these papers simply were better—based on my careful evaluation of both groups of papers as well as the grades these papers received when graded anonymously by my colleagues as part of our final examination procedures—with respect to correctness, organization, style, and, most importantly, substance than the essays of the students who had not had the benefit of this guidance, and both groups of students were essentially the same with respect to intellect,

attitude, and effort. Britton probably would not approve of this kind of guidance and in fact says as much when he claims that he feels that students using these kinds of guides do not give "full meaning" to what they write. I must respectfully disagree with Britton on this point because of my experience with this topic, but he and I are much closer to agreement regarding his second point of interest to my experience and research project: writing for "the teacher as examiner" vs. "expressive writing."

In the classroom and while developing curricula, syllabi, and essay and examination prompts, I and my USMAPS colleagues have constantly struggled with the conflict between requiring students to do what we feel they "should" do vs. what they "want" to do. In an ideal world, of course, one is able to bring together these two goals for students, and Britton's ideas regarding students writing for their teachers simply because they have to do so in order for teachers to examine their writing—vs. students truly expressing themselves via writing they want to do—fall squarely into this arena. After reading these thoughts of Britton, I became much more aware of this tension and have devoted considerable effort to my and my colleagues' efforts to meld these two concepts. Fortunately, and based on a great deal of student feedback during that time, we learned that framing writing requirements so that they encourage students to do "expressive writing" makes an enormous difference in their interest and engagement in that writing. We have made our prompts much more open-ended during this process—for example, our recent Quarter Three final examination asked students "What value is there in memorializing or erasing difficult elements of the past?"—and have made conscious efforts to enable students to write about things of interest to them: the Quarter Three final examination prompt was based on a series of readings and discussions about the recent debates across college campuses and in various statehouses regarding Civil War memorials, state flags, and other related items. Students reacted strongly and enthusiastically to the chance to express their ideas about these topics, a reaction that resulted in papers of high quality that were a pleasure to read. Thus, with respect to

writing as something done simply so that teachers can examine it vs. writing as expressive manifestations of student thought about topics that deeply interest them, Britton's thoughts made a strong, very positive impact on our program and influenced my research project by causing me to contemplate how this kind of distinction could have impacted student performance.

Patrick Hartwell, "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar"

The question of the proper role of grammar in learning and teaching writing has played a notable part in English classrooms for decades, including the English classroom of today. Thousands of texts—books, essays, articles—have been written on this topic because of its centrality in the ongoing discussion of how best to teach writing, but one of the most influential and widely cited is Patrick Hartwell's now classic "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar." This essay, written more than three decades ago, speaks to today's classroom as if it had been written only yesterday and greatly influenced my thoughts about USMAPS English and this dissertation.

The focus of Hartwell's piece is the proper role of grammar in teaching and what the research on such teaching has revealed. To arrive at his conclusions regarding these topics, Hartwell uses a framework of four questions, paraphrased as following: 1. Why is grammar so important? 2. What is the definition of grammar? 3. What does research suggest about the efficacy of formal grammar instruction? 4. What does a theory of language predict about the value of formal grammar instruction? (108). Hartwell provides a great deal of erudite, quite insightful discussion regarding these questions, but the points he makes that are most relevant to my study concern the definition(s) of grammar, his assertions regarding what research about the proper role of grammar in teaching and learning writing has revealed, and his critique of what he calls "grammar four."

Grammar is a notoriously difficult word to define, and x number of English teachers would almost certainly provide x number of different definitions of this key term. Hartwell uses a framework developed by W. Nelson Francis in 1954 (109) to come up with his own five aspects of grammar. Essentially, these five aspects move from the foundational, meta-conceptions of grammar dealing with the subconscious ways in which people structure their thoughts in order to be able to articulate them in a language to the formalistic systems of grammar dealing with things such as diagramming sentences to basic kinds of correctness and usage such as punctuation, agreement, and mechanics.

Even more important than his definitions of grammar, though, are Hartwell's assertions regarding what research about grammar in the context of learning and teaching writing has revealed and what he believes is the obvious way forward for English teachers with respect to this question. With respect to the first topic, Hartwell flatly asserts that the research has revealed essentially nothing: "But seventy-five years of experimental research has for all practical purposes told us nothing [because] [t]he two sides are unable to agree on how to interpret the research. Studies are interpreted in terms of one's prior assumptions about the value of teaching grammar…" (106). Concerning the latter topic, Hartwell concludes his essay by stating "It is time that we, as teachers, formulate theories of language and literacy and let those theories guide our teaching, and it is time that we, as researchers, move on to more interesting areas of inquiry [than researching the efficacy of formal grammar instruction]" (127). Ultimately, though, Hartwell makes it clear throughout his essay that he believes that formal grammar instruction is of little use and that teachers need to teach—and students need to learn—"grammar" in the context of reading and writing and not as a stand-alone entity.

With respect to my dissertation as well as my almost twenty years of teaching composition, the most important point of Hartwell's essay is twofold: on the one hand, my experience comports completely with Hartwell's claim that instruction of "formal" grammar—esoteric terms and concepts such as predicate nominatives, verbals, and

absolute phrases that most students assuredly do not remember for long, if they ever understand them in the first place—is at best a waste of time and at worst a detriment to students' learning because they find this kind of grammar instruction very frustrating and have to devote invaluable time and energy to this topic instead of to clearly more important topics. On the other hand, though, Hartwell seems to give short shrift to topics of grammar—what he calls "grammar 4"—that I am absolutely certain, based on student feedback and, more importantly, on my observations of student writing throughout almost forty intense semesters of teaching college writing, are worth teaching and that in fact should be emphasized throughout composition curricula at all levels of schooling, as appropriate to each level.

These topics stem from the kinds of punctuation and usage that really matter with respect to allowing students to clearly and powerfully convey their thoughts to their audience. I always stress to my students that each one of them has something important to say and that "grammar" is simply a tool that enables them to convey their thoughts in a way that will enable the audience to understand them and to want to understand them. Essentially, these topics are parts of speech; subjects and verbs; main and subordinate clauses; fragments and fused sentences; semicolons; the three most important kinds of comma usage—after introductory elements, with coordinating conjunctions, and with essential and nonessential elements; pronoun/antecedent and subject/verb agreement; possession and apostrophes; and passive/active voice. Fundamentally, what I observed about student writing—in the context of "grammar"—the first year I taught, 1992, was the same thing that I am currently observing: more than three-fourths of the grammar errors that occur in student writing stem from a lack of knowledge about the topics listed previously. Moreover, I have learned not only that students can master these topics when they are taught as stand-alone entities and then reinforced through feedback to their writing but also that they are eager to do so. Student after student has told me that he or she was "relieved" and "happy" to "finally" know how to punctuate and structure writing

so that it clearly conveys meaning, which, of course, is often the whole reason for writing: to clearly convey students' ideas about the given topic, or, even better, about the topic they have chosen to discuss. Students also said that the method of requiring them to correct their papers in accordance with the feedback about grammar they had received and then re-submit those papers was what ultimately caused them to internalize—to learn—these topics. Finally, and from my perspective, the proof of learning is always in the student writing I evaluate, and over the course of evaluating more than ten thousand essays from more than two thousand students, teaching grammar this way "works" in that students show demonstrable, noteworthy improvement in this aspect of their writing over the course of a semester as evidenced by far fewer errors of these sorts.

Thus, what Hartwell has to say about teaching and learning grammar proved to be enlightening, provocative, and thought-provoking. With respect to this dissertation, his thoughts caused me to think deeply about the role that grammar plays, and should play, in teaching composition—the primary purpose of EN 101 and USMAPS English, in addition to critical reading—and examine those questions in ways that I never had. Ultimately, Hartwell's essay confirmed my belief that the teaching of grammar is an extraordinarily complex, contentious topic, but it also confirmed—contrary to what Hartwell himself believes—that certain aspects of grammar should be taught as grammar, per se, and then reinforced via feedback to student writing.

***What is College Level Writing?* (Vols 1 & 2)**

The final text I will address, which is actually two volumes, focuses on a topic that could not be more germane to my project: college-level writing and how to define and teach it. Indeed, the title of the aforementioned two volumes is *What is "College-Level" Writing?*, and both volumes proved to be invaluable with respect to providing many thought-provoking essays and topics directly applicable to my concerns regarding how to think about what the USMAPS and USMA English curricula do with respect to "college-

level" writing and how these curricula relate both to each other and to the larger themes about writing addressed in these texts. These volumes consist of a series of essays by renowned authors and are published by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), an organization with a prominent role in the field of research about writing.

Within the more than forty essays that comprise these two volumes, I found three to be particularly useful for my research. The first, the "Introduction" to Volume I by co-editors Patrick Sullivan and Howard Tinberg, focuses on a seemingly obvious but wonderfully pithy observation about college-level writing: it involves the need for students to move beyond "the self-centered focus of youth" (xiv) to a larger concern about issues dealing with people far removed from the self. This observation resonated with me because, as I will discuss in Chapter IV when I examine the ramifications of this choice, the USMAPS English curriculum has in the past three years steadily moved away from narrative and descriptive essays focused on the experiences of the author to argumentative essays dealing with topics relating to the nation and, indeed, the world as a whole.

The second essay in *What is College-Level Writing?* of particular relevance to my research is Patrick Sullivan's "An Essential Question: What is College-Level Writing?" Because one of the two fundamental goals of the USMAPS English program is to prepare its students for "college-level" writing, specifically argumentative writing at USMA, this article promised to offer valuable insights about the topic of writing in college, and it did not disappoint. Interestingly, and ironically, this article's thoughts regarding the difficulty of defining college-level writing led me to take a foundational look at my department's writing program because of the challenges associated with defining college writing that Sullivan addresses: the nature of language itself (4); the vagueness of any terms used to describe "college level" (2); and the vast differences that exists among colleges with respect to expectations, demands, and standards (14). These challenges initially made me despair of pinning down the essence of what the USMAPS English curriculum is

supposed to do, but, after continued reading, I saw that Sullivan ends up in a place that is very much in accord with my experience and hopes for our curriculum. This place is based upon the belief that college-level writing fundamentally involves students' reading "high level" material that addresses a number of perspectives about an important topic and then engaging in analyzing, evaluating, integrating sources, and following standard rules of grammar and usage (17).

The third and final essay in these two volumes that impacted my thoughts regarding how to assess the effectiveness of the USMAPS English program was Sheridan Blau's "College Writing, Academic Literacy, and the Intellectual Community: California Dreams and Cultural Oppositions." This article covers a wide range of fascinating topics, but the one of most interest to me was Blau's claim that the key question with respect to writing, and particularly what would normally be characterized as advanced writing, is not "What is college-level writing?" but rather "What is (advanced? high level? sophisticated?) writing?" This re-phrasing of the question rests upon his contention that "what defines college writing is less essentially about what defines college than it is about what defines the discipline of writing" (375), and he ends up calling college writing "intellectual discourse." This perspective was quite interesting, and useful, to me as I was considering how to assess the impact of the USMAPS English program because it led me to think outside of the parameters I usually associate with this question and to move away from the perspective of "college" writing or "preparatory school" writing and instead look at writing as "a discipline of the mind" (375)—"intellectual discourse"—that we can help our students instill in themselves.

This review of the literature concerning remediation and closely related topics has been an arduous but incredibly rewarding odyssey. The content in this literature review represents only a small portion of what I read and studied, which of course is itself a tiny portion of what has been written about remediation and English education. However, this journey has been well worth the effort because it not only exposed me to a wide variety

of opinions about remediation, it strongly reinforced a point with which I was quite familiar but which I am now even more cognizant of: studies vary tremendously in quality, and simply because something is in writing does not make that something credible. Given the complexity of this topic and the biases that even the most impartial researchers bring to their task, this wide range of quality should not have been surprising, but it was.

Conclusion

Fundamentally, and extremely importantly for my research project, this literature review has done three things. First, it has greatly increased the breadth and depth of my knowledge of the two general areas I investigated, both of which are crucially important to my study: English education in America and, especially, remediation. Second, it has shown me that good research in general and that research about remediation in particular is extremely difficult to do and to interpret, as evidenced by the fact that credible analyses of strong research sometime arrive at vastly different conclusions. Third, and in some respects because of but in other respects despite the concerns in the preceding point, this literature review made me even more excited to conduct my own research about the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students, the results of which are stimulating and hopefully noteworthy and are found in the Findings & Analysis and Conclusions & Recommendations chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter IV

THE METHODS

Overview

This chapter discusses in detail the methodology I used for my research project—that is, why I chose the research methods I chose and how I applied those methods to my project. This fifth chapter also contains the first of the three levels of analysis I used to make meaning of the data I had collected, a tripartite process of analysis I describe in detail in an upcoming section. Fundamentally, and as I will explain at length in later sections of this chapter, I used a mixed methods, case study approach that consisted of examining one case—the performance of USMAPS graduates in USMA English core courses—based on qualitative and quantitative data in almost equal parts. The qualitative data stemmed from respondents' perceptions manifested via interviews, surveys, classroom observations, and a focus group discussion. The quantitative data resulted from a series of data queries conducted by the USMA Office of Economic Manpower Analysis (OEMA). These queries were conducted based on a series of questions I had developed and provided to OEMA, and the queries covered almost two decades of USMA English data consisting of more than a quarter-million data points. While all of the quantitative data were quite useful and played a key role in the findings and resultant conclusions and recommendations of my research, two especially important parts of these data were contained in what I termed "just above/just under" analysis, a feature of this study that I address in detail in the data collection methods of this chapter, and this study's

examination of the possible impacts of a two-year USMAPS English curriculum revision upon its students' performance in EN 101, a process also discussed in this chapter's data collection section.

Two foundational parts of my research project that are particularly germane to my methodology are my purpose statement and research questions. These two entities capture the essence of why I conducted this research project and the framework for how I conducted it. My purpose statement follows: I am studying the USMAPS English curriculum and the performance of USMAPS graduates—and perceptions of that performance—in their core English courses at West Point, but especially EN 101, in an attempt to determine the extent to which that curriculum prepares Cadet Candidates for success in the English program at West Point and in order to develop curricular reforms in the USMAPS English program that will better prepare USMAPS students for success in their core English classes at USMA and perhaps offer valuable insights to other post-secondary college preparatory institutions.

With respect to conducting research to answer the questions raised by this purpose statement, the following four research questions guided the conduct of my research:

Research Question One: How do USMA Department of English and Philosophy (DEP) faculty, Direct Admits, and former USMAPS students perceive others' or their own preparation for EN 101 as measured through interviews, classroom observations, surveys, and a focus group discussion?

Research Question Two: How do USMAPS graduates perform in EN101 and the three other core English courses with respect to their Direct Admit counterparts when the two groups are compared on the basis of final course grades?

Research Question Three: How do the perceptions from Research Question One compare with the performance data from Research Question Two?

Research Question Four: To what extent can any of the results stemming from Research Questions One through Three be determined to arise from students' experience in the USMAPS English program?

In upcoming sections of this methodology chapter, I will discuss my role as a researcher; the research design of this research project; the necessary information I had to gather; the research samples I used to gather that necessary information; my data collection methods; the process I used to analyze the data I collected; and the trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations of my study. I will then conclude this chapter and move to this project's penultimate chapter: findings and analysis.

Researcher's Role

As the person conceiving, refining, developing, implementing, and analyzing the research project in all of its myriad facets, the researcher is obviously deeply involved in her or his—or, if part of a group project, the group's—research project. While all of these aspects of the researcher's role are important, one of the most important challenges a researcher faces is to remain impartial in the face of what can be the extremely powerful temptation to influence the research project in a way that is in accord with what he wants or hopes to find as opposed to what the data indicate. This influence can take place in any number of places during the project—conception, refinement, development, implementation, and/or analysis—and for any number of reasons. Researchers often devote literally thousands of hours—year of their lives, in many instances—to a particular research project, so their personal investment in the project can be enormous; moreover, the very livelihood of a researcher can ride upon the results of a research project. Additionally, researchers must be wary of not only intentional but also unintentional improper influence regarding their research because people often are powerfully influenced by factors of which they are only dimly, if at all, aware.

Two specific concerns researchers must constantly keep in mind are reflexivity and positive bias. With respect to reflexivity, there are two facets to address: one is an overarching concern that the researcher must recognize at all stages and is clearly captured in the following passage from "Qualitative Research Guidelines": "Reflexivity is an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to the effect of the researcher, at every step of the research process. 'A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions"' (Malterud, 2001, p. 483-484). The second facet of reflexivity is a related but distinct part of research that is also an overarching concern and that has its foundations in philosophy and any scientific research. I learned about this kind of reflexivity while studying philosophers as varied as David Hume and Karl Popper, but the essence of this idea is that one must always be careful not to confuse or conflate cause and effect.

Positive bias, or confirmation bias as it is sometimes known, refers to the very common but potentially ruinous tendency for people in general and researchers in particular to look for and interpret things in ways that confirm what they want to believe or feel they already know, in the case of the general population, or develop, implement, and analyze experiments in ways conducive to arriving at desired results, in the case of researchers. Both of these concerns—reflexivity and positive bias—are clearly extremely important for researchers to carefully consider if they are to have any hope of being objective in any sense of the word. Essentially, researchers must ask themselves at all stages of the research process—conception, design, implementation, and analysis—whether they are doing everything possible to be objective with respect to what they investigate, why they investigate it, and how they investigate it.

In my case, these two concerns were particularly noteworthy because not only was I the researcher but also I was researching the organization that I lead and hope to lead

for many years: the USMAPS English Department. Moreover, I have devoted a large portion of my life over the past almost six years to learning about, guiding, and then leading this organization, and I am passionate about its mission and that it accomplish that mission in the best way possible. Thus, with respect to the central question of this research project—To what extent, if any, has the USMAPS English program impacted its students' success in USMA English?—I obviously had much to carefully and constantly consider with respect to attempting to ensure that my research was as objective as possible and that I was being "reflexive" about recognizing the potential pitfalls of conducting research into my department while acting in a way that would make me guilty of positive bias. In the data collection section of this chapter, I provide a great number of details about how I conducted my research in a way to be reflexive and preclude the danger of positive bias, and in this chapter's limitations section I discuss this topic at length as well. However, at this point in this chapter, I will say that, at a minimum, I was distinctly aware from the initial stages of my research—my strong but very general desire to attempt to learn to what degree, if any, the USMAPS English program was "working" with respect to preparing its students for USMA English—of the need to be constantly aware of designing, implementing, and conducting research that would allow me to answer that question as objectively as possible and to, in effect, let the cards fall where they may. After reading the penultimate sentence of my Abstract and also all of the details of how I designed, conducted, and analyzed my research, my reader will hopefully feel as if I succeeded in being a reflexive researcher who did not exhibit positive bias.

Research Design

I ultimately decided to use a research design based on a mixed methods case study using qualitative and quantitative data, and what follows is the rationale for that decision. Within this section of the Methods chapter, I discuss the exploratory and explanatory

aspects of my study; highlight the kinds of knowledge claims that underlie my research; examine the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches available to researchers; and explain why I ultimately decided upon a case study design using mixed methods.

There exist a myriad of possible rationales for choosing a specific research design, but arguably the first decision the researcher must make in designing the research project is whether that project will be exploratory or explanatory in nature because this decision drives many subsequent decisions. Fundamentally, my research project is largely exploratory in nature, although it certainly involves explanatory elements. This study is essentially exploratory because it is the first of its kind—i.e., the first study to examine in detail possible connections between the USMAPS English curriculum and the performance in USMA English of those students who studied that curriculum—and because it is fairly broad as a result of its ground-breaking nature. I did not undertake this study to validate or invalidate a certain hypothesis because I simply did not know enough about the entity I wanted to study to develop a meaningful hypothesis to test, but I strongly felt that undertaking a detailed study of that entity and its possible impact on its students would nonetheless be quite worthwhile. As things turned out, this study was, in my estimation, an extremely beneficial use of my time, and it resulted in what I believe are several findings with explanatory power. However, at its root, this study was an exploration of a case that had never been studied in any kind of comprehensive way, and its findings, conclusions, and recommendations have hopefully laid the foundation for explanatory studies regarding this case.

Once the researcher has determined the degree to which the research project will be exploratory and/or explanatory, she or he must carefully consider the kinds of knowledge claims that will underlie the project; many authors characterize this facet of a research project as its epistemology. The primary types of these knowledge claims have been characterized and categorized in many different ways, but a common scheme, and one

that John Creswell uses in *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, is positivism, postpositivism, constructivism, participatory, and pragmatism (6). Highlighting the differences among these competing epistemologies is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but I have consistently gravitated toward pragmatism—beginning more than twenty years ago, as a graduate student in philosophy—as the best explanation for the basis of our knowledge, and that theory serves as the foundation for this research project. The reason it serves as such is that while the other theories have wonderful strengths, all of them have, in my estimation, correspondingly glaring weaknesses. Pragmatism, meanwhile, has always struck me as neatly combining the strengths of the other theories of knowledge without being mired down in their weaknesses. Essentially, pragmatism argues that there is no one "right" way to understand knowledge; that "truth" is what "works" at the time; that research always occurs in some kind of historical, social, and political context; and that delving any deeper than the aforementioned points always results in controversy and disagreement (12).

After the foundation for the research project has been laid with respect to its nature—exploratory or explanatory—and the types of knowledge claims that will underlie it, the researcher faces another fundamental question: should he use a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approach? For many decades, these three approaches have dominated research. Quantitative research was for many years the only widely accepted research method, and this method became widely accepted in the late nineteenth century (Creswell, "Research" 13). Although researchers had clearly been using qualitative methods during the same time period they were using quantitative methods, these qualitative methods were codified and generally accepted only relatively recently, beginning in the early 1990s (14). An even more recent entry into the realm of widely accepted research methods is the mixed methods approach, one that, as the name implies, mixes quantitative and qualitative methods; this method came into being as early as 1959 but became popular only during the past few decades (15).

Each of these methods now represents standard practice in the research community. With respect to which of these methods would be the best basis for my research, I was fortunate to be able to use a number of seminal texts to make that decision. Those texts were Joseph Maxwell's *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, Second Edition; Lyn Richards and Janice Morse's *Qualitative Methods*, Third Edition; Bruce Berg and Howard Lune's *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*; and John Creswell's *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design.* Although each of these texts focuses on qualitative research, as the respective titles indicate, each also contains a thorough discussion of quantitative research and its strengths and weaknesses. In addition to these texts, three articles played a critical role in my decision: John Creswell's "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Design" and "Understanding Mixed Methods Research," along with Gail Caruth's "Demystifying Mixed Methods Research Design: A Review of the Literature."

Each of these methods—qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods—focuses upon research in a way reflective of its title, and, unsurprisingly, each has strengths and weaknesses. As I underwent my odyssey as a researcher the past five years, I began that journey without even knowing what the major research methods were; I then gravitated towards a qualitative approach because of my desire to focus on my subjects' perceptions; I later realized that such a focus would preclude me from exploring the wealth of quantitative data to which I would have access; and, ultimately, I decided to in effect combine the quantitative and qualitative traditions by using a mixed methods approach because this approach would enable me to explore my case in depth—a hallmark of qualitative research—but would also allow me to broaden the applicability of my project, a primary characteristic of quantitative research. Indeed, as Creswell states in "Research Design," "By mixing the data, the researcher provides a better understanding than if either [quantitative or qualitative methods] had been used alone" (7). He makes this claim for a variety of reasons, but the primary ones are that mixed methods research

(MMR) contains strengths that offset the weaknesses of quantitative or qualitative methods; MMR enables the researcher to provide the most comprehensive research; and MMR allows researchers to explore topics that quantitative or qualitative methods could not address alone (9). Additionally, as Gail Caruthers explains in "Demystifying Mixed Methods Research Design…," her review of the literature concerning MMR indicates that "An increasing number of researchers have begun employing a MMR" and that many researchers have concluded that "MMR has the potential to offer more robust research" (9). For all of the aforementioned reasons, I decided to utilize MMR as my research method.

In addition to deciding whether a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach would work best, the researcher must also decide upon the framework for that approach. Creswell's *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* proved to be especially helpful in deciding upon that framework. In this work, Creswell provides an in-depth explanation of all five of the major qualitative approaches—narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, and case study—and close study of this explanation led me toward what has turned out to be just the right choice: case study. As was the "case" with the three primary research methods—quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods—each of the five approaches has strong strengths and weakness, and each can and has served as an invaluable tool for countless researchers. However, with respect to my project, case study was clearly the best choice because I was ultimately examining a "case": "…the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (*Qualitative* 73). In my instance, the issue was the extent to which the USMAPS English program has prepared its students for the USMA English program; the case itself was the manifestation of that issue during the timeframe I selected for my study: 1996 until 2014; and the bounded system was the institutions in which the issue and case occurred, USMAPS and USMA. Thus, after carefully considering which of the five

major frameworks would be best for my study, I selected the case study method and have found that it has served me well.

Before moving to the next section of this chapter—necessary information—a synopsis and clarification are in order regarding my research design. At its heart, my research project was a mixed methods, case study design, as I explained earlier via the literature from Creswell and Caruthers. However, because Creswell categorizes the framework I selected for my project—case study—as part of the qualitative tradition, confusion might arise regarding whether my study is fundamentally qualitative or quantitative. In my mind, my study was neither: it was truly a mixed methods study because it relied on an essentially equal mix of qualitative and quantitative data. Additionally, the framework for my research project was a case study because it focused entirely upon one case: the USMAPS English program and the possible impact it had upon its students' performance in EN 101. Thus, despite the welter of research traditions and frameworks that impacted my decision-making process regarding my research design, in the end, that design was clearly a mixed methods, case study design.

Necessary Information

After I had determined that my research project would be essentially exploratory in nature, that it would be based on pragmatic knowledge claims, and that it would have a mixed methods, case study design, I had to decide what kind of information would be necessary to accomplish my study. This information was initially overwhelming in its breadth and depth because of the decision I had made to use a wealth of not only qualitative but also quantitative data, but the fact that the data stemmed directly from my research questions ultimately made its collection manageable. Additionally, although the upcoming discussion regarding the rationale for why I deemed certain information to be necessary for my study is fairly detailed, I provide a more specific discussion of the

nature of that information in the data collection section of this chapter, when I examine each data collection technique I used for my project. Finally, while all of the data I decided to collect and analyze was necessary for my study, some kinds of data were more important than others, from my perspective. Specifically, the qualitative data was equal in collective importance to the quantitative data, but the individual qualitative data groups did end up in a hierarchy, and that hierarchy was—from least to most important—classroom observations, focus group discussion, interviews, and surveys. The classroom observations were useful but turned out to be of only limited use; the focus group discussion was interesting and provided another perspective on interviews but was ultimately not worth repeating; the interviews were quite valuable in exploring the perceptions of key participants in depth; and the surveys were extremely valuable in providing a large-scale, fairly detailed synopsis of the perceptions of a large number of participants.

Qualitative

For a study of this scope, determining exactly what information was needed to complete it was unsurprisingly an iterative, recursive process. When I began my research, I believed that my study would focus only on perceptions, so the information I initially sought was solely qualitative in nature and centered upon interviews, observations, focus group discussions, and surveys. After I had decided to focus on perceptions, I had to determine the precise vehicles I would use to obtain these perceptions. I ultimately concluded that interviewing USMA English faculty members about their perceptions regarding how well their Prepster students were prepared for USMA English and interviewing USMAPS graduates and Direct Admits about their perceptions of how well prepared they felt for USMA English as a result of their experience in the USMAPS English program or high school, respectively, would be vital information.

Additionally, I wanted to observe several USMA English classes, primarily to determine if I could discern the identity of the USMAPS graduates in those classes based on how those students performed and behaved during class in comparison to their Direct Admit counterparts. My reason for wanting to see if I could make this distinction between Direct Admits and Prepsters was that I had heard from a number of sources that Prepsters did not "perform as well" during class as did Direct Admits, and I wanted to see if I noticed any such difference in USMA English classes; noticing or not noticing such differences might have important implications regarding the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students and how well they were prepared by that program to successfully integrate into USMA English classes. Moreover, I believed that getting together a focus group of USMAPS graduates to discuss their perceptions of the extent to which the USMAPS English program prepared them for the USMA English program would be a valuable part of my qualitative data collection because this kind of forum would offer a meaningful way to compare and contrast the responses of USMAPS graduates interviewed individually with the responses of a group of USMAPS graduates. Finally, I wanted to administer surveys to DEP faculty, Direct Admits, and Prepsters in order to gain a wide-ranging insight into their perceptions regarding student level of preparation for EN 101.

When it came time to develop the tools I would use to gather the specific qualitative data I believed that I needed, I spent a great deal of time developing my interview questions, observation protocol, focus group framework, and surveys. I provide the specific interview questions I used for the USMA faculty and USMAPS graduates I interviewed in Chapter Five and Appendix F, but the guiding principle behind those questions was that I wanted them to be open-ended enough to elicit a wide range of responses but specific enough to enable the respondents to recognize the parameters I had in mind. Additionally, I tailored the questions for each group to focus on specific items of interest—e.g., how much, if any, additional time USMA English faculty felt they had to

devote to Prepsters both inside and outside of the classroom as well as USMAPS graduates' perceptions and recollections regarding the effort they had devoted to USMAPS English vs. the effort they had devoted to USMA English—based on the topics I wanted to explore, which were in turn based on my research questions.

For the classroom observations I conducted, I decided that in order for me to obtain the most impartial, realistic observations possible with respect to being able to discern which students were Prepsters and which were Direct Admits, I would be a non-participatory observer so that my presence would hopefully only minimally influence the behavior of the students I was observing. With respect to specifically what qualitative data I wanted to gather, my driving principle was to enter the classroom I was observing unaware of which students were USMAPS graduates so that I could attempt to objectively determine if these students behaved in any kinds of observable ways that distinguished them from their Direct Admit counterparts in order to use that information to get a sense of how well Prepsters had integrated into USMA English classrooms. Specifically, and as I stated earlier, I was looking to see if any students or group of students were not performing well in class in order to determine if that kind of behavior was happening at all in DEP classes and, if it was happening, to learn if it was associated with Prepsters, or Direct Admits, or a combination of both groups. Prior to visiting the classes I observed, I examined a roster of the students in that class to ensure that I did not know any of them, a process I repeated for every visit and which necessitated a few changes to my schedule, when I saw that I did in fact recognize some of the names in a given classroom.

With respect to the specific information I wanted to gather during my classroom observations, once I had ensured that I would be visiting a class containing no students I recognized, I focused—as I detail in the upcoming data collection section—on looking for any patterns of behavior or demeanor within the classroom that would set apart in any way any student or group of students within the classroom. That behavior could have

been participation in class discussions, attentiveness and/or note taking during lectures, interactions with fellow students, frequency and/or quality of comments during class discussions, and general demeanor during the class. If I had witnessed any such distinguishing behavior, I would have then asked the instructors of those classrooms to identify which of those students were USMAPS graduates and which were Direct Admits. As it turned out, though, and as I will soon discuss in much more detail, no USMA English class that I observed exhibited any of the aforementioned behaviors by any individuals or groups, which of course is itself an important observation. An additional point, and one that I will discuss in more detail in this chapter's Limitations section, is that I should have been much more cognizant of the possibility of observer bias on my part and taken steps to mitigate that possible bias, and I also should have been more detailed with respect to exactly the things I was focused on observing.

For the focus group discussion I conducted, the specific qualitative information I was hoping to collect was closely related to the qualitative information I was hoping to gather during the individual interviews. The questions I developed for the focus group discussion were quite similar to those I developed for the interviews and that are highlighted above, but the setting for the former questions was markedly different than that of the latter ones. My main purpose for conducting the focus group was to compare and contrast the kinds of responses I received in it to the responses I received in the interviews in order to see if a group setting might lead to different kinds of answers from those involved. To preview what I will discuss in depth in the data collection section, the information I received during the focus group discussion was quite similar to that I received during the interviews I conducted.

Regarding the qualitative data I hoped to collect via my surveys, I developed and then administered a survey to the entire faculty of the USMA Department of English faculty, and I repeated the same process with a different survey given to the entire Plebe Class of 2018. Because my response rates were surprisingly high—50% for the former

survey and almost 40% for the latter—I collected a great deal of useful information via these surveys. I verified with a colleague of mine in the USMAPS Mathematics Department that the number of people I surveyed—42 in DEP and more than 1,000 in the Class of 2018—was a viable population size for each survey and that the aforementioned response rates—twenty-one of forty-two USMA English faculty and 392 of 1042 freshmen responding—were statistically significant and provided a basis for me to be confident in the significance of the responses.

Quantitative

My quantitative information stemmed from the tens of thousands of data queries that one of the primary research organizations at West Point collected for me, based on the detailed queries that I had provided to this organization. I will address the specific questions that formed the basis of these queries during subsequent sections of this study, but the information collected addressed the following areas: numbers of students who enrolled at USMAPS, who received offers to attend USMA, and who enrolled at USMA; Direct Admit and Prepster graduation rates from USMA; grade point averages of Direct Admits and USMAPS graduates; grade point averages of USMAPS English grades and number of course failures in USMAPS English; grade point averages of core USMA English courses—EN 101, EN 102, and EN 302—and number of course failures in these courses, for Direct Admits as a group and USMAPS graduates as a group; correlation of SAT verbal scores per quintile and EN 101 grades for the entire Plebe class, not sub-divided into Direct Admits and Prepsters; a comparison of the EN 101 grades of Direct Admits and Prepsters with similar entering SAT verbal scores; and, finally, a comparison of the EN 101 grades of USMAPS graduates in 2010 and 2011 with the same grouping of students in 2013 and 2014, in order to examine possible impacts of a significant change to the USMAPS English curriculum that occurred during that timeframe.

As it turned out, the information discussed in this section is exactly what I ended up needing for my study. After developing my findings, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations, I realized the vital importance of all of the information I had collected, and I also felt that I had not missed any necessary pieces of information. I plan to do several smaller, more focused studies of the effectiveness of the USMAPS English program in the upcoming years, and I am sure that I will refine the information I seek as a result of those investigations, but the information I have outlined in this section of this chapter served this study well.

To facilitate the reader's understanding of what I deemed to be necessary information and how that information served my project, I have included the table on the following page. This table categorizes the necessary information by research question so that the reader can easily discern how this information was related to and stemmed from the framework for the research project: the research questions. In an attempt to be as succinct as possible while retaining clarity, I have condensed the verbiage within the necessary information table.

Table 1. Summary of Necessary Information

Research Question (RQ)	Necessary Information	Collection Vehicle
RQ1: How do DEP faculty, Direct Admits, and Prepsters perceive their and others' preparation for EN 101?	*Perceptions of DEP faculty, Prepsters, and Direct Admits regarding student preparation for EN101	*Interviews of USMA DEP faculty and Prepsters *Surveys of USMA DEP faculty and Prepsters *Focus group *Classroom observations
RQ2: How do Prepsters perform in EN101 with respect to their Direct Admit counterparts, based on EN101 final grades?	*Data regarding Prepster and Direct Admit performance in EN101, including final course grades but also SAT scores, USMA GPAs, USMA graduation rates, "just above/just below" grades, and 2010/11 vs. 2013/14 grades	*Data collected and sorted by OEMA specialists via USMA databases

Table 1 (continued)

Research Question (RQ)	Necessary Information	Collection Vehicle
RQ3: How do the perceptions from RQ1 compare with the data from RQ2?	*Comparing perceptions from RQ1 to data from RQ2 to determine how closely perceptions of EN101 performance match data regarding that performance	*Series of comparisons of perceptions with corresponding data, as conducted in Chapter Five: Findings and Analysis
RQ4: To what extent can any of the results from RQ1-3 be determined to arise from students' experience in USMAPS English?	*Any causal or correlational links between perceptions and data regarding EN101 performance and USMAPS English program	*"Just above/just below" EN101 grades as well as EN101 grades in 2010/11 and 2013/14 (two years of grades as manifestations of "pre" and "post" USMAPS English curriculum change) because of these two datasets' isolation of the variable: impact of USMAPS English program

Research Sample

In this part of my discussion of the methods I employed for my research project, I examine my research sample: the individuals from the population being studied who participated in my project. To perform this examination, I address in detail the sampling methods I employed as well as the criteria I used to select the individuals who participated in this research project.

Sampling Methods

Because my research project used a mixed method design, I had to consider sampling from a quantitative and qualitative perspective. Quantitative and qualitative research are fundamentally different in important ways, so it stands to reason that the sampling methods appropriate for one would not fit the other, and vice-versa. Because my project involved literally the entire possible population for the time-period studied—all USMAPS students and Direct Admits from 1996-2014, due to the significant change in admissions policy that occurred in 1995 for students entering USMAPS—I was able to utilize the primary sampling method of quantitative research, probability sampling, for

the quantitative portion of my study. The term "probability" refers to the researcher's being able to determine the probability of any given subject's being sampled. Knowing this probability is quite important to quantitative researchers because their gold standard for sampling normally involves randomization, meaning that no subject has any more or less probability of being chosen. Moreover, quantitative researchers often want to be able to generalize their conclusions, and being able to generalize is contingent upon having a randomized sample.

In a manner that is clearly applicable to my research project, "Research Methods Knowledge Base" says, "A probability sampling method is any method of sampling that utilizes some form of *random selection*. In order to have a random selection method, [one] must set up some process or procedure that assures that the different units in [the] population have equal probabilities of being chosen" (1). For the quantitative part of my mixed methods study, I was able to use a sample that clearly met the test of randomization: the entire population of interest—all students at West Point from 1996-2016. Thus, my sampling for my quantitative data fully embodied probability sampling and randomization because it ensured that "different units in [the] population have equal probabilities of being chosen" by virtue of choosing all of the units—students—in the population. Because every student in the sampled population was chosen, every student had the same probability of being chosen as any other student; thus, in this instance, the sample population and the entire population were identical.

With respect to the research sample for the qualitative portion of my study, the sampling rationale was not nearly as easy as it was for the quantitative portion. Within the realm of qualitative sampling, there exists a myriad of sampling techniques, but they all fall under the umbrella of non-probability sampling, that is, sampling in which randomization is not achieved nor sought because qualitative researchers normally do not intend to generalize their conclusions and are instead interested in gaining in-depth knowledge about a particular case, phenomenon, or group in detail. Within the realm of

non-probability sampling, two foundational kinds of sampling are convenience and purposive. Convenience sampling involves what its name implies: choosing samples because it is convenient to do so. Purposive sampling, meanwhile, as explained in "Purposive Sampling," "relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units (e.g., people, organizations, etc.)" to be studied, and the primary goal of this kind of sampling is to "focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest" (1). This kind of sampling certainly has weaknesses: it can be highly susceptible to researcher bias that manifests itself during the sample selection process, and it leads to a sample population that is difficult to defend, as are all populations selected via non-probability sampling, as being representative of the entire population in question. However, purposive sampling also has strengths: it affords researchers a wide range of specific sampling techniques, and it ultimately can provide its users with solid justification for making generalizations from the sample that is being studied (1, 2), if the sample is chosen particularly carefully and if the researcher desires to make generalizable claims.

In my study, and as outlined in Imelda Coyne's "Sampling in Qualitative Research," the two specific types of purposive sampling I employed were maximum variation sampling and homogenous sampling (627). Maximum variation sampling attempts to address the widest possible range of perspectives regarding the thing being studied, while homogenous sampling uses units of a sample of which have identical or very similar traits. I used the former method of sampling for the interviews I conducted of USMAPS graduates when I made the decision to interview a high-achieving, a mid-range, and a low-achieving student, and I used the latter method when I decided to focus my interviews of USMA Dept. of English faculty on seven faculty members, all of whom were USMAPS and/or USMA graduates. Additionally, I used a combination of these two sampling techniques when I performed my classroom observations because the four classes I observed all consisted entirely of a wide range of cadets—maximum variation

sampling—and the classes themselves were quite uniform in that they consisted only of the four core English class cadets must take and thus comprised homogenous sampling. Having said that, I fully acknowledge the existence of serious concerns regarding the very small size of my purposive sample for my student interviews as well as the fact that all three students knew me by virtue of having had me as one of their USMAPS English instructors. I address these concerns extensively during the interview section of my data collection section as well as during the limitations section of this chapter.

Selection Criteria for Each Population

My research involved five distinct populations, each one corresponding to a particular data collection method I used. The qualitative data for my study came from four of these five populations, those that I established to conduct my interviews, focus group, observations, and surveys, respectively. The quantitative data for my project derived from the fifth population, which consisted of all cadets who were Plebes from 1996 to 2014, as discussed in the context of the probability sampling I performed for this project. This fifth population merits little extra attention with respect to my research sample because it consisted literally of every student at West Point during the time studied—approximately twenty thousand students—and as such provided my project with a wonderful resource. There was obviously no researcher bias involved in its selection because every possible subject was involved in the study, and the population could not have been any more representative because it consisted of the entire population being studied. However, the four non-randomized populations studied for this project do merit further discussion because their selection required me to make a number of judgments, all of them important, regarding who was or was not selected. Additionally, even though the Pilot Study I conducted was not formally part of my research project, I am including its population in this discussion of my research sample because that population ended up being an integral part of my study due to my receiving permission

from the USMA IRB to use the data from the Pilot Study in my project. Thus, for all intents and purposes, the population for my Pilot Study—which consisted of the focus group discussion I conducted, interviews of three USMA instructors, and observations of two classrooms—was indistinguishable from that of my research project and bears inclusion with that of my formal study, and when I use the term "study" or "research project" in the discussion of my research sample, I am including in that term the participants from my Pilot Study as well as my formal study.

Interviews

I conducted a total of ten interviews for my study, and each interview involved one participant. The interviews consisted of two groups of participants: seven faculty members from the forty-one member USMA Dept. of English and Philosophy (DEP) and three students from USMAPS who had completed EN 101 at the time of their interviews. For the faculty members, the selection criteria I used were that they were currently teaching in DEP—I know many DEP faculty members who were not teaching at the time of my study—and that they had taught or were teaching EN 101 at the time of the interview because I wanted to interview faculty who were currently in the classroom and who had experience with teaching EN 101. Additionally, I wanted the faculty members to be diverse with respect to what I considered to be important criteria for the participants as a whole: age, experience teaching, gender, ethnicity, USMAPS experience, USMA or ROTC graduate, civilian or military, personality, and knowing or not knowing me. I believed that doing purposive sampling to develop a group that collectively comprised a wide range of these criteria would enable me to interview faculty members who captured the diversity of DEP faculty and their feelings about their USMAPS students' preparation for and performance in EN 101. Additionally, even though the DEP faculty is largely male, military, and Caucasian—approximately 60% of the faculty fit into this category—that faculty is relatively diverse: approximately 25% civilian, 30% female, and 20%

minority—Hispanic, African American, Native American, or Pacific Islander. Thus, for my interviews, I wanted a group of faculty who were fairly representative of DEP as a whole.

I believe that these criteria were justified because each criterion addresses an attribute that is relevant to teaching and that, when present to varying degrees in the participants as a whole, provides a diverse perspective on teaching EN 101 and perceptions regarding USMAPS students. As it turned out, I was able to assemble a group of faculty members who were quite diverse regarding these criteria and who thus offered a diverse range of viewpoints. Without being so specific that I would intrude on each faculty member's anonymity, I can unequivocally say that the faculty members I interviewed collectively met all of my goals with respect to diversity and representativeness. Specifically, I interviewed faculty who (collectively) ranged from younger to older; had been teaching for more than a decade and who were first-year instructors; were male and female; were of varying ethnicities; were USMAPS graduates and not USMAPS graduates; were West Point and ROTC graduates; were civilian and military; had a wide range of personalities; and knew me prior to the interview and did not know me prior to the interview.

For the students I interviewed, I also wanted to assemble a diverse group comprised of students who were representative of the UMSAPS student body. I realize that the number of students I interviewed individually—vs. in the focus group I conducted—was quite small, and I address the ramifications of that small sample size in the limitations section of this chapter. Suffice it to say here that cadets are extremely busy people, and meshing my very busy schedule with their schedules proved to be quite difficult, but I undertook several measures to make my purposive sampling of interviewed students as diverse and representative as possible. The criteria I used were ones I believed would help me accomplish the goal of assembling a diverse, representative sample of students. Thus, I chose to contact former students of mine whom

I knew to embody the kind of diversity I was seeking; again, I realize that contacting former students to interview is fraught with peril because of obvious issues regarding power, desire to please, and willingness to be frank, and my data collection section addresses how I attempted to ameliorate these concerns.

I sought a group of students to interview who collectively manifested a wide range of the following criteria—gender, ethnicity, geographical background, personality, and performance in USMAPS English—and I believe that these criteria were justified because they are quite relevant to perspectives students might have with respect to their preparation for EN 101. Regarding the goal of using an admittedly small sample of students to represent the perceptions of USMAPS students regarding their preparation for EN 101, I believed that interviewing three students who collectively embodied the wide range of the criteria above would enable me to accomplish that goal. Again, without revealing too much about any individual student in order to preserve anonymity, I was fortunately able to assemble a group of students who were quite diverse and strongly representative of their peers. The students I interviewed included both genders; the two primary ethnicities at USMAPS: African American and Caucasian; geographical backgrounds covering literally almost the entire continental U.S.; a wide range of personalities, from effusive and cheerful to almost somber; and performance ranging from excellent to mid-range to barely passing.

Focus Group

My study included only one focus group, for reasons I discuss in my Pilot Study appendix. This focus group consisted of five former students because coordinating for any greater student involvement would have been almost impossible because of conflicting, very busy schedules; additionally, despite obvious concerns regarding including former students of mine, I wanted this group to be diverse and representative, so I contacted former students whom I knew to embody a range of characteristics. For

the focus group, the criteria were the same as for the interviewees because the focus group is essentially a group interview. Thus, I wanted to assemble a diverse, representative group of students who manifested a range of characteristics with respect to gender, ethnicity, geographical background, personality, and performance in USMAPS English. As was the case with the students I selected to interview, these criteria were justifiable selection criteria because they allowed me to conduct a focus group discussion with students who embodied a range of characteristics which I believed would in turn manifest a range of perspectives about preparation for EN 101. Fortunately, I was able to assemble a group of students for the focus group discussion who collectively included almost all of the characteristics I sought. I was not able to coordinate for a female student to be part of this focus group, but the five male students who comprised this group were quite diverse with respect to their ethnicity—three African American and two Caucasian; geographical background—students from the southern, northern, eastern, and western portions of the U.S.; personality—ranging from quiet to boisterous to studious to carefree; and performance in USMAPS English—from excellent to middling to poor.

Observations

For the four classroom observations I conducted, one of my most important selection criteria is that I decided to observe one section of each of the four DEP core courses—EN 101, for fall freshmen; EN 102, for spring freshmen; PY 201, for sophomores; and EN 302, for juniors—because I wanted to observe USMAPS students in a range of English classrooms to see them as they matured and advanced through the DEP curriculum. Additionally, at the time of my observations, I expected to use Prepster performance in all four DEP core classes as the basis for my study. However, as my research progressed, I realized that I needed to focus only on EN 101 performance because to do otherwise would have been unmanageable as well as not as powerful because of the looser connections among the non-EN 101 courses and USMAPS English.

Thus, my observations would have been better focused only on EN 101 classrooms. However, observing USMAPS students across a wide range of classrooms and class years certainly was illuminating, as I explain in my findings and analysis chapter.

Regarding the criteria I used to select which particular classrooms I would observe, I again had to mesh my schedule with the DEP class schedule, which restricted my choices. Most importantly, though, because I knew that each classroom I observed would consist of students who had essentially been randomly selected by the USMA Registrar's office for inclusion in those particular classrooms—for example, all Plebes must take EN 101, with the exception of the very few who validate it, so the Registrar's office simply places students in various sections in order to meet a wide variety of scheduling constraints, which is why the one hundred sections of cadets I taught at USMA always contained the same wide range of geographical background, ability, interests, gender, and ethnicity—my primary criterion when choosing classes to observe focused on observing classes with a diverse range of instructors. I wanted to observe classes (collectively) taught by a range of instructors who essentially embodied the characteristics I sought in the faculty I interviewed: age, experience teaching, gender, ethnicity, USMAPS experience, USMA or ROTC graduate, civilian or military, personality, and knowing or not knowing me. I believe that these criteria were justified because they would afford me the opportunity to observe USMAPS students being taught by a wide range of instructors, and, at West Point, the instructor plays an outsized role in the character of the class because every class is quite small—an average of fifteen students—and the teaching culture is for instructors to be very engaged with their students. I was able to achieve this desired diversity by doing purposive sampling of the faculty, and I ended up observing classes taught by instructors ranging from their late twenties to early fifties and consisting of three experienced teachers and one first-year teacher, two males and two females, three Caucasians and one Hispanic, two USMAPS graduates, two USMA graduates, three officers and one civilian, and three who knew me and one who did not. Additionally,

these instructors possessed a wide range of personalities, ranging from stern to warm and loquacious to taciturn.

My final criterion is an obvious one but one that nonetheless merits inclusion here: each class I observed needed to contain at least one USMAPS student, and preferably a few, but none of whom I knew. To meet these criteria, I obviously could not know ahead of time which students were Prepsters, so I simply asked each instructor whose class I was hoping to observe if he or she had any USMAPS students in class. Unsurprisingly, all instructor had at least one Prepster in all of their classes, so I knew prior to my observations that the classes I would observe had at least one Prepster. I then looked at each instructor's roster ahead of class—no student was identified as Prepster or Direct Admit—to ensure that I did not recognize any of the names. These criteria were justified because I wanted to ensure that my observation would include only classes that contain Prepsters so that I would use my time wisely and because I did not want to know ahead of time which students in any class I observed were Prepsters so that my observation would be legitimate with respect to determining whether Prepsters could be identified as a group apart from Direct Admits, for reasons I have already explained and further explain in my data collection section.

Surveys

The final group of my qualitative research sample consists of those DEP faculty members and EN 101 students who took the surveys I developed for each group. Because all DEP faculty teach EN 101 at one point in their tour of duty, I made the survey available to all DEP faculty. The survey for EN 101 students—separated on the survey into Direct Admits and USMAPS graduates—was made available to all students taking EN 102, which was essentially all students in the USMA Class of 2018 because only a few students in that class were not taking EN 102 at the time the survey was administered. The survey was given to EN 102 students because the focus of the survey

was EN 101, and all students in EN 102 had taken EN 101 a semester earlier. Thus, the selection criterion for this part of my research project was quite straightforward: respondents were included in the sample simply by virtue of being a DEP faculty member—all of whom were teaching or had taught EN 101, except for the first-year philosophy instructors, who numbered only four—or a spring semester EN 102 student, all of whom had taken EN 101 in the fall. This criterion is justifiable because both sets of respondents had experience directly relevant to the topic at hand: perceptions regarding student preparation for EN 101. Fortunately, the leadership of DEP was quite supportive of DEP faculty and students taking these surveys, so, as I discuss in my data collection section, I was able to achieve a strong response rate to these surveys.

Because my research project was quite complex with respect to its research sample—quantitative and qualitative data, as gathered via database queries and interviews, a focus group, observations, and surveys, respectively—and the narrative description and analysis of that sample is more than eight pages, I include on the following page a comprehensive table summarizing the sampling methods and selection criteria I used for my study that have been detailed in the preceding paragraphs.

Data Collection

After all of the previous steps were completed—considering my role in this research, designing the project, determining what information was necessary for the project, and deciding which parts of the research population I would sample—I was prepared to begin collecting the data that would serve as the basis for my findings, after gaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for my study. In this data collection section, I detail the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process I underwent to gain institutional approval to conduct my study, provide the overall flow of my data collection efforts, discuss the role that my pilot study played in those efforts, and explain

Table 2. Research Sample

Desired Data	Collection Tool	Sampling Method	Population	Sample Population	Selection Criteria
Quantitative: EN101-related scores	USMA database queries	Probability (random)	USMAPS students from 1996 to 2014 n = app. 20,000	Entire population n = app. 20,000	All USMAPS students attending USMA from 1996 to 2014
Qualitative: Perceptions	Faculty interviews	Non-probability (purposive)	DEP faculty in 2012, 2014 n = 42	Selected individuals n = 7	Diversity Representativeness
Qualitative: Perceptions	Student interviews	Non-probability (purposive)	USMA Class of 2018 n = app. 1050	Selected individuals n = 3	Diversity Representativeness
Qualitative: Perceptions	Focus group discussion	Non-probability (purposive)	USMA Class of 2018 n = app. 1050	Selected individuals n = 5	Diversity Representativeness
Qualitative: Perceptions	Classroom Observations	Non-probability (purposive)	USMA Class of 2018 n = app. 1050	Selected individuals n = 63	Diversity Representativeness
Qualitative: Perceptions	Faculty survey	Non-probability (purposive)	DEP faculty in 2014 n = 42	Entire population n = 21 (self-selected)	All DEP faculty serving in DEP in 2014
Qualitative: Perceptions	Student survey	Non-probability (purposive)	USMA Class of 2018 n = app. 1050	Entire population n = 392 (self-selected)	All members of USMA Class of 2018 during spring 2014

in detail the "what, why, and how" of each major step in the data collection process. Those major steps consisted of observations, interviews, surveys, and database analysis.

IRB Approval

Any research involving humans is fraught with dangers regarding the possibility for harm to those involved, whether that danger be intentional or unwitting and whether it be mortal or minimal. Fortunately, the research community has learned from mistakes made by previous researchers—ranging from simple, unintentional and unpublicized releases of information to parties who did not use the information to harm anyone all the way to horrific, well-publicized research conducted by Nazi scientists upon Holocaust victims—and has put into place many safeguards for the subjects of research. There now exist, and have existed for decades in America, a host of government agencies the primary focus of which is protecting research subjects' rights, and from the perspective of the individual researcher, all of those agencies and protections manifest themselves in the Institutional Review Board approval that must be gained as part of any formal research.

In my case, I had to gain IRB approval from two institutions—Columbia University and the United States Military Academy—because the former is the institution granting my degree, and the latter is the institution that housed all of my research subjects and information relating to them. I found the dual IRB approval process to be more time-consuming than I had anticipated but also much more worthwhile than I had initially thought it would be. The approval process taught me a great deal about the fundamentals of protecting the rights of research subjects, and the lessons I learned from this training that I applied to my research were contained in the two forms I had to develop in conjunction with guidance from the respective IRB offices: Participant's Rights and Informed Consent.

As its title indicates, the Participant's Rights form deals with specific rights that the subject has by virtue of being a subject in my research project. Those rights span the

range from knowing that participation in my study is strictly voluntary to realizing that I will not release any personally identifiable information about a subject without that subject's express consent to being cognizant that I am always available to contact regarding this research project and every subject's participation in it. The Informed Consent form, meanwhile, enabled my research subjects to know the specific nature of my research, the risks associated with participating in my research, the absence of penalties for not participating or payment for participating in my study, that I will secure all data associated with this study, and how I will use the results of my study.

For my study, all participants dealing with qualitative data—interviews, observations, and the focus group discussion I conducted—received, signed, and returned to me copies of both of the aforementioned forms. Additionally, I made it very clear during my communications before and during all of these data collection events that all of the provisions contained in the Informed Consent and Participant's Rights forms applied to these events. Moreover, and on a very important note because of the use to which I put the qualitative data collected in my Pilot Study and as I stated earlier in this chapter, I received permission from the USMA IRB office to use that data, even though I had collected it prior to formally beginning my study, because of the measures I had taken during that part of my data gathering to protect the rights of my subjects.

Regarding all of the quantitative data that I collected, including the survey responses, and that data numbers in the hundreds of thousands of pieces of information, I received express approval from the USMA IRB as well as the Director of the Institutional Research Office to query, gather, collate, and store all of that data. Additionally, as I described earlier, every Plebe who participated in the survey received an email from me making it clear that there was absolutely no pressure to take the survey and that all responses would remain anonymous. Not a single piece of all of the quantitative data was collected or transferred to me in association with any kind of information that would link it to any individual addressed by my study, and all of the information that was sent to me

was ultimately in the form of nine pages of consolidated tables, all of which I stored on my government-owned computer that never leaves my office and that is password protected. The organization that collected and collated the data for me also has copies of these tables as well as all of the raw data, and that organization keeps all of its data in encrypted files on U.S. government servers. The bottom-line is that the rights of all of my research subjects were extremely well protected during my research, and there exists essentially no potential that anything contained in my research documents or this dissertation will cause any harm to any subject of my research.

Overview of Data Collection Process

My data collection began with my pilot study, a summary of which I provide in the following paragraphs. Once I completed my pilot study, I knew that I wanted to collect my qualitative data via a series of classroom observations, interviews, and surveys. After completing my pilot study and gaining IRB approval for my study, I moved to my formal data collection. This process involved my conducting a series of classroom observations, interviews, and surveys while simultaneously working with OEMA to collect and analyze data regarding USMAPS students' performance in EN 101 from 1996-2014 as the quantitative basis for my study. At the conclusion of my data collection process, I had gathered a great deal of invaluable quantitative and qualitative information regarding the question of what possible impact the USMAPS English program has on its students' performance in EN 101, and I was able to then analyze that data to arrive at my findings.

Pilot Study

After I had conducted a sizeable portion of my literature review and determined the approach my study should take, I performed a detailed pilot study of the methodology I had in mind at the time, which was purely qualitative in nature. This pilot study consisted of three interviews and two classroom observations, along with a focus group discussion. This study was invaluable in that it showed me that these data collection techniques

would be a rich source of information for my study, and it also taught me many valuable lessons regarding the particulars of how to develop and implement effective interviews, observations, and focus group discussions.

While I did not conduct a pilot study, per se, regarding my quantitative data, two lengthy, detailed discussions with the data collection organization that collected this data for me (OEMA) served as a de facto pilot study for my quantitative data. Specifically, those discussions and the resultant time that I spent poring over the initial datasets I received enabled me to focus my queries in much more productive areas than my initial queries had explored, which in turn led me to the quantitative data I ultimately used for this study. Had it not been for the pilot study-like technique I employed regarding my quantitative data collection and analysis procedures, my study would not have data nearly as powerful as the data it eventually collected. Additionally, my pilot study was invaluable in that its first stage, the qualitative data collection discussed above, led me to the realization that I needed to expand my study to include quantitative data. The qualitative data were in and of themselves extremely enlightening and a necessary component of my research, but gathering and then analyzing these qualitative data made me realize what I was missing by not looking at the quantitative part of the equation. That realization did not occur suddenly, in some kind of epiphany, but it did come about fairly soon after my pilot study, and it almost certainly would not have surfaced had I not conducted my qualitative data pilot study.

Although my pilot study was an integral and quite important component of my research project, it was not part of my formal study, so I have included its details in Appendix D, as opposed to addressing them in the body of this dissertation. Additionally, the only focus group discussion I conducted was part of my pilot study, so I have also included it in an appendix (E) instead of including it in my methods chapter. It is important to note, though, and as I stated earlier, that the USMA IRB granted me approval to use the data I collected from the focus group, three DEP faculty interviews,

and two classroom observations I conducted as part of my pilot study. As a result of that permission, I have included that data throughout my study in a way that does not distinguish between it and the data I collected during the formal part of that study because both "sets" of data are equally valid and equally important to my project.

Data Collection Foundation

The upcoming sub-sections of this section of my methodology chapter—observations, interviews, surveys, and database analysis—provide the details of precisely how I conducted my data collection. I collected qualitative and quantitative data because in order to gain the most comprehensive picture possible of the relationship between the UMSAPS English program and its possible impact on student performance in EN 101, I wanted the depth provided by qualitative data and the breadth and generalizability that stem from quantitative data, hence the mixed methods nature of my project. An additional, underlying principle that drove me to want to gather both kinds of data was triangulation. This term has many different precise definitions, but most of them make essentially the same point Maxwell does in *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* when he says that triangulation is "Collecting information using a variety of sources and methods…" (93) and "…collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods…" (112). The reason that triangulation is so important is that it is a critical step in ensuring that a study does not exhibit systemic biases or chance associations. However, as Maxwell also points out, using triangulation is certainly not a guarantee that a study will have validity (112), and he quite interestingly claims that his notion of validity is not the classic definition learned by many students of logic—validity is the property an argument has when it is not (logically) possible for its premises to be true while its conclusion is false—but is rather the idea that "there is a way that you might be wrong" (106), so validity is essentially the characteristic of a research project that concerns the chances that it might be "wrong."

The lower those chances are, the higher the validity is, and vice-versa, so researchers want to do everything possible to increase the validity of their studies, and triangulation is one very important way of achieving that goal, especially for qualitative studies.

Data Collection Timeline

With these concepts of triangulation and validity in mind, I ultimately decided to use the wide range of data collection methods I have previously outlined: classroom observations, interviews, a focus group discussion (discussed in Appendix E), surveys, and an examination of the performance of USMAPS graduates and Direct Admit cadets in core USMA English courses through a series of queries about specific aspects of that performance. Initially, when I began my research in the spring of 2012, I decided to conduct a pilot study that would employ what at that time I believed would be the full extent of my data collection methods: interviews, classroom observations, and a focus group discussion. As I came to learn more and more about various research methods, though, I realized that I wanted to broaden the basis for my study, so in the fall of 2014 I decided to also incorporate surveys and quantitative data collection into my study, which I did in the spring of 2015. During the course of the approximately three years that I conducted my data collection, I did so in an iterative process in the sense that I began that process with my initial interviews and classroom observations as well as my focus group discussion.

After learning that interviews and classroom observations were invaluable components of my qualitative data collection but that the focus group discussion was not, I decided to conduct a second round of interviews and observations. I also decided to integrate surveys into my collection efforts in an attempt to capture as many faculty and student perceptions as possible via this comprehensive collection tool, and I knew at that point that I wanted to also collect quantitative data. I performed this second round of data collection over the subsequent two years, a process I completed in the spring of

2015. Because the step-by-step process I used for data collection was relatively complicated, I decided to organize my description of that process by individual collection vehicle. Additionally, while all three vehicles I used for multiple collection efforts of qualitative data were vitally important, I discuss them below in what I consider to be ascending importance (for reasons I explain in Chapter Five)—observations, interviews, and surveys—and that discussion follows a "what, why, how" pattern for each collection vehicle, including the last such vehicle I discuss: quantitative data collection and analysis, a vehicle that is, in my mind and for reasons I discuss in Chapter Five, equally important to the collective importance of the three vehicles I used to collect qualitative data.

Relationship Among Data Collection and Analysis

On a final but very important note prior to moving to the conduct of my data collection, I need to clearly state the connections and flow among my data collection section, data analysis section, Chapter Five: Findings and Analysis, and Chapter Six: Themes, Lessons, and Contributions so that the reader is cognizant of those connections and that flow. The data collection section of this chapter explains what data I collected, why I collected that data, and how I collected it. The data analysis section of this chapter provides my analysis of that data, that is, how I managed and examined my data to look for patterns that would lead me to the results of my data collection efforts and then to my findings. Neither of these sections, though, contains the results of my data collection. Those results are instead in Chapter Five and serve as the basis for my discussion of how I derived my findings from my data. The final chapter of this dissertation, Six, uses those findings as well as further analysis of the data to arrive at this study's themes, lessons, and contributions.

Classroom Observations

I conducted a total of four classroom observations: two in the Spring of 2012 and two in the Spring of 2015. I decided to use classroom observations as part of my

qualitative data collection efforts because I believed that observing students in DEP core classes might shed light upon how the UMSAPS English program had impacted its students, specifically with respect to their behavior in USMA English classrooms. At the time I conducted my initial observations, I had already decided to use interviews for part of my qualitative data collection efforts, but I decided to supplement that part of my collection process with observations because, as Maxwell tell us, "While interviewing is often an efficient and valid way of understanding someone's perspective, observation can enable you to draw inferences about this perspective that you couldn't obtain by relying exclusively on interview data. This is particularly important for getting at tacit understandings…as well as aspects of the participants' perspectives that they are reluctant to directly state in the interviews" (94). In keeping with Maxwell's insightful thoughts about the power of observation, I, too, was very much hoping to learn via classroom observations things about the possible impact of USMAPS English on its students that I very well might not be able to glean by virtue of interviews.

Fundamentally, I was hoping to determine whether USMAPS students had successfully transitioned to life in the undergraduate English classroom, as evidenced by their behavior and, even more importantly, engagement in that classroom. At USMA, students are cadets and as such live within a much more constrained environment than do most college students. However, even though cadets begin classes by being called to attention and must address their instructors as "Sir" or "Ma'am," they fundamentally are expected to do the same kinds of things in class that are expected of all college students: be attentive, respectful of others, and involved in the discussion or whatever other classroom activities are occurring at any given moment. Observing behavior in a classroom is in one sense relatively straightforward—I discuss another sense when I detail in the following paragraph how I went about my observations—however, discerning student engagement as a result of that observation is a much more complicated, tenuous task. Student engagement is an entire field of research in and of

itself, but for the purposes of my study, I considered student engagement through three lenses: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Wong Dodge). That is, as I conducted my observations, I tried to carefully observe student behavior—with respect to alertness, body language and demeanor, note taking, participation in class discussions, and working with peers—to determine how these students were displaying behavioral engagement, and I then attempted to consider how those behaviors might manifest student engagement with respect to cognitive and affective engagement. Concerning cognitive engagement, I was listening for the quality and, to a lesser degree, quantity of their comments during class and group discussions, and I was observing the extent to which they were taking class notes and/or annotating their texts. Regarding students' affective engagement, I looked carefully at how they interacted with one another and with their instructor to attempt to ascertain what kinds of relationships they might have established within the classroom. As I conducted my observations, I was also fundamentally attempting to see whether any groups of students stood out, and I was specifically trying to see if I could discern which cadets were USMAPS students; ultimately, if I were unable to make such a distinction, that inability would speak volumes about the extent to which USMAPS students had successfully integrated themselves into the USMA English classroom, as I explain in detail in Chapter Five.

For each of my four observations—EN 100R, EN 102, PY 201, and EN 302—I followed the same procedures, the "how." As I discussed earlier, I contacted a wide range of instructors and was able to arrange my observations based on their and my schedule. All classrooms had between fifteen and seventeen students, sitting in a room that was relatively spacious but not commodious. In all four classrooms, the desks were arranged in a "square-shaped U," with desks around three edges of the classroom and the instructor's desk in the front, center of the classroom. All classrooms had expansive chalkboards, along with a white board at the front of the room. I was a non-participant observer because I wanted to minimize my impact on what happened in the classroom

during my observation, but each instructor briefly introduced me at the beginning of the class so that students would not wonder about my presence. Each class was fifty minutes in duration and began with the section marcher's calling the class to attention and reporting to the instructor how many students were absent, and the class began immediately afterwards. Each class followed roughly the same pattern: the instructor began the class with welcoming remarks and then told the students how class would proceed. Every instructor used some sort of outline or agenda, written on one of the boards at the front of the class, as the basis for the flow of that day's lesson. Once class had begun, I observed a variety of activities, ranging from instructor-led discussions to small-group discussions based on instructor guidance to oral presentations to essay workshops to a discussion of a midterm examination that had occurred the lesson prior.

I did not use any sort of formal protocol for my observations—for example, a checklist or table that I had prepared in advance and that I would use to annotate my observations. By the time I conducted these classroom observations, I had performed probably more than two dozen other classroom observations, for reasons varying from formal observations of other instructors to casual visits to colleagues' classrooms to witness them use a specific technique or discuss a certain topic, and I initially attempted to use formal protocols for several of these observations. I found, however, that I spent more time looking at the protocol sheet than on observing the class, so I soon instead began taking "field notes": detailed notes of everything of interest I observed in that class, things including the instructor's rapport with the students; the students' interactions with one another in terms of collegiality, frequency, and depth; the general atmosphere in the classroom; the number of times that individual students made comments during discussions; whether students were looking at me during the class; if there seemed to be any cliques within a classroom; and anything else I considered to be (literally) noteworthy. I used this same technique for my four dissertation observations and was pleased with the results.

During each class, I took copious notes of everything I observed from the beginning to the end of that class, and I arranged those notes strictly chronologically: I began taking notes on the top of my observation sheet and simply added notes as the class proceeded. At the end of each observation, I had taken an average of two to three pages of single-sided notes. While taking notes, I focused on the behavioral, cognitive, and affective engagement that I discussed earlier, and I address the results of my observations in Chapter Five. An important point to make here is that while I was conducting my classroom observations, I was certainly cognizant that observations are obviously ultimately "in the eye of the beholder [observer]." Thus, I attempted to observe each class as objectively as I could, which meant in practice that I tried to be as observant as possible and not look at what was occurring with respect to any preconceived notions of what I expected or hoped to happen. At the end of each class, the instructor provided concluding remarks and released the students. After each class, I spoke with the instructor for a few minutes regarding his or her perceptions of how the class had gone and thanked him or her for allowing me to be an observer; I then departed the classroom. Once I returned to my office, I immediately reviewed my notes to ensure that I could read what I had written, and I added a number of thoughts to each set of notes based on my reflections about that class.

Interviews

I conducted a total of ten individual interviews, of seven DEP faculty who were teaching or had taught EN 101 and three students who were USMAPS graduates and had taken EN 101. I decided to include interviews as part of my qualitative data collection process because interviews are a longstanding tradition of qualitative research due to the depth they can provide regarding the topic(s) in question. Indeed, as we see in Irving Seidman's *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they

make of that experience" (9) and "At the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth" (9). Prior to conducting my data collection, I strongly felt, by virtue of my long experience as a teacher and student, that students and instructors would have much of worth to say about their perceptions regarding the USMAPS English program and its connection to the USMA English program, so I wanted to use interviewing as one of my primary qualitative data collection methods.

There exists a wide variety of ways to structure an interview, and I again turned to Seidman, this time for advice regarding which technique to use for my interviews. In the opening to his chapter about structuring interviews, Seidman claims that "The word *interviewing* covers a wide range of practices. There are tightly structured, survey interviews with preset, standardized, normally closed questions. At the other end of the continuum are open-ended, apparently unstructured, anthropological interviews that might be seen almost…as friendly conversations" (15). I decided to use the former technique because although I wanted to have a relaxed environment in which my subjects felt comfortable expressing their feelings, I had specific information that I wanted them to address, so I developed a list of detailed questions prior to the interviews and conducted them according to these questions. I did not field test my interviews prior to conducting three of them as part of my pilot study, but those three interviews did serve as a field test for the seven interviews I would subsequently conduct. That field test demonstrated to me that my approach to conducting the interviews, an approach I will describe shortly, worked well, based on feedback from the first three interviewees, but it also showed me that I must speak more slowly and clearly when conducting the interview.

Although I interviewed two distinct populations—DEP faculty and cadets—the "how" of the conduct of the interviews was essentially the same for both groups, so I will not distinguish between these two sets of interviews in this discussion. I have already

discussed how I selected the individuals I interviewed, and once that part of the interview process was complete, I coordinated with each person regarding a suitable date, time, and place to hold the interview. The interviews began in the spring of 2012 as part of my pilot study and concluded in the spring of 2015. For the DEP faculty interviews, I held all of them in the offices of the respective interviewees, for their convenience. For the student interviews, I met each student in a private room of the Jefferson Learning Center (USMA Library). Each of the interviews lasted between fifty to seventy minutes, and I tape recorded each interview and took voluminous notes as I was conducting the interview. I began each interview by thanking the interviewee and reiterating the purpose of the interview—fundamentally, to gain his or her perceptions via oral responses to a series of questions regarding the extent to which the USMAPS English program had prepared its students for the USMA English program—and then describing in detail how the interview would proceed. I had asked each person prior to the interview if it would be acceptable for me to tape the interview, and I repeated that question prior to beginning the interview; all participants stated that taping the interview was fine. I then described to each participant how the interview would proceed. That description included the number of questions I would ask, roughly how long I believed the interview would take, and my request that each person be completely candid because the value of the interview largely depended on the candor of responses; as part of that request, I assured each participant that I would preserve his or her anonymity. I asked each respondent to read and sign the IRB paperwork, and I also asked each person if she or he had any questions for me before I began the interview.

When the interview began, I used the interview protocol that is contained in Appendix F and asked each question in the order in which it is listed. While the participant was answering the questions, I took notes, including anything I heard that might need further clarification before moving to the next question. All of the interviews went well with respect to the demeanor of the participants—each one seemed at ease and

enthusiastic about providing in-depth responses—and the flow of the interview. The time passed quickly, and I was always able to ask for clarification when I needed it. Conversely, every participant asked me for clarification at least once or twice during the interview, and my replies seemed to address the participants' concerns. At the conclusion of the interview, I thanked each participant for taking the time to support my research, and I made it clear that I was available for any further clarification that the participant wanted to provide or to gain from me. After I returned to my office, I reviewed my notes to ensure that I could read everything I had written, and I listened to the tape recording while the interview was fresh in my mind, a process during which I made additional notes.

Surveys

I administered two surveys as part of my qualitative data collection process. Both surveys were administered in the spring of 2014: one to the DEP faculty then serving at USMA and the other to the USMA Class of 2018, Plebes at the time who had completed EN 101. I initially thought of these surveys as quantitative in nature because of how I was planning to analyze the responses, but I quickly realized that they were essentially qualitative in nature because they dealt with respondents' perceptions regarding the questions on the survey. In fact, as Robert Yin points out in his *Case Study Research: Design and Research*, "Yet a third type of interview entails more structured questions, along the lines of a formal survey. Such a survey could be designed as part of a case study and produce quantitative data as part of the case study evidence" (91). Prior to reading this analysis of a survey, I had never thought of a survey as being a kind of interview, but in my case that is exactly what it was.

In essence, I viewed my surveys as an opportunity to relatively easily reach a wide audience and in effect conduct a mass interview of the audience based on questions regarding their perceptions of student readiness for EN 101. The fundamental issue

addressed by both surveys was the perceptions of both populations regarding student preparation for EN 101 and what those perceptions were for the key sub-populations of instructors, Direct Admits, and USMAPS graduates. Additionally, the surveys focused on how those perceptions evolved over time, in an attempt to get at the root of the impact of preparation undergone by the two primary groups of student respondents.

Before administering these surveys, I spent approximately nine to ten hours developing the questions, which may seem surprising, given the brevity of those questions. However, the process of developing these questions was an eye-opening one for me because of the time and precision required to address exactly what I wanted to address, and, of course, the fundamental question of what I wanted to address evolved during the course of developing the questions. I did not field test my surveys prior to administering them, but I did seek feedback from a number of USMAPS and DEP faculty members about the surveys, and that feedback was extensive and played an enormous role in the final product. Additionally, developing an effective, efficient way to respond to the survey questions raised a host of possibilities, and I ultimately decided—based in large part on my colleagues' feedback—upon a numeric scale of one through ten, with one being "strongly disagree" and ten being "strongly agree." The surveys themselves are in Appendix H.

I determined that administering the surveys to all of the USMA English faculty as well as to the entire then Plebe class would obviously completely address any potential sampling concerns that might arise because in both instances the populations with access to the survey would be the entire population. In the former population, all USMA English faculty, whether literature or philosophy specialists, teach the freshman composition course, EN 101, so asking all faculty to take this survey would cover all faculty who had taught or were teaching EN 101. Concerning the latter population, the students, all freshmen must take EN 101—except for those who validate this course, which is a very small number, perhaps sixty per year, and which includes at most one or two USMAPS

graduates—so administering the survey to all freshmen would essentially completely cover the population in question.

In terms of actually administering the surveys, I sought the assistance of two former colleagues in the USMA English Department, both of whom were senior members of the Department and were quite helpful. One of these members sent the faculty survey to all faculty within the Department and included a note asking that everyone consider responding to this survey but making it clear that all responses would be anonymous and that there would be no penalty for not responding or no reward for responding. That note included a message from me that provided a brief outline of my research project and how this survey fit into that project, along with assurances that the project had IRB approval, that responding was completely voluntary, that all responses would be confidential, and that neither penalties nor rewards were associated with responding.

For the student survey, the other USMA English faculty member forwarded the survey to all instructors of EN 102, the literature course that almost all Plebes take every spring semester and that has EN 101 as a prerequisite, and asked these instructors to forward it to their students. This request from the senior instructor included the same provisos that the faculty survey did as well as the same kind of message from me, to make it clear that this effort would involve no kind of harm or ill effects on its respondents, regardless of their decision to participate or not. Both of these surveys were administered during the spring of 2014, and the response rate for each survey was quite pleasing: fifty percent for the faculty survey and just under forty percent for the student survey. According to the office of Instructional Assessment Resources at the University of Texas at Austin, response rates of 50% for email surveys are considered "very good" and 40% are "good," so the USMA English faculty responded in a very good manner and the USMA Plebes responded in a "good" manner. However, the University of Texas criteria almost certainly do not account for the hectic schedules of people like West Point

cadets, especially Plebes, so a 40% response rate for this category of individuals is actually much better than "good."

Once the surveys were administered, I was easily able to tabulate the responses because of very helpful support I had received from a colleague. He helped me develop the survey, but his even more important contribution was helping me—a Luddite—use technology to make the survey easy for the respondents to access, complete, and submit as well as easy for me to access and analyze. We used a Google site to house the survey, and the emails to the DEP faculty and Class of 2018 cadets contained a link to the survey. I heard of no problems regarding accessing the survey, and the brevity of the survey almost certainly contributed to respondents' willingness to complete it. Once the survey deadline had passed, we closed the link and accessed all of the responses. My colleague also developed a straightforward but detailed compilation of the results, which I used as the basis for my analysis of the responses. After the completion of the survey, I sent thank you emails to my DEP colleagues and the USMA Class of 2018.

Quantitative Data

As part of my data collection process, I collected a large amount of quantitative data. This data took the form of a series of tables (Appendix J) and resulted from data queries conducted on my behalf by OEMA in the winter and spring of 2015. These queries stemmed from questions I developed before and during meetings I had had with OEMA personnel. OEMA has access to an enormous dataset encompassing all kinds of information relevant to West Point in general and to my study in particular, and I was quite fortunate to be able to have access to this information.

As I detailed earlier in this chapter, after conducting my pilot study, I began to think seriously about expanding my study to include quantitative data, and I finalized that decision during the fall of 2014. I made this decision in order to triangulate my sources as robustly as possible and thereby have the firmest possible base for my research and the

findings, conclusions, and recommendations stemming from that research. At the time of my decision to include quantitative data in my study, I was very confident that my qualitative data would be sufficient for a solid research project, but I wanted to see the extent to which perceptions regarding the impact of the USMAPS English program meshed with quantitative data regarding that program. One final "why" consideration worth reiterating and amplifying is that a key part of my quantitative data collection was why I investigated the specific years I investigated. Because preparatory schools have been serving West Point for one hundred years as of next year, and because West Point has had a formal United States Military Academy Preparatory school since the founding of USMAPS in 1947, the number of years I could have investigated was quite large, but because of the key decision made concerning admissions criteria for classes entering USMAPS in 1995—to admit to USMAPS only students who were disqualified from entering USMA as well as to focus on admitting students who would help the Academy meet its class composition goals, specifically with respect to minorities and recruited athletes—I used that year as the beginning year for my quantitative data collection. In the years since that decision, roughly forty percent of students admitted to USMAPS have been recruited athletes, and normally more than half of the admitted students have been minorities.

With respect to how I conducted my quantitative data collection, I knew very early in the collection process that I wanted to see what the quantitative data were with respect to obvious points such as grades in EN 101, incoming standardized test scores and high school transcripts, and USMAPS English grades. I also knew that I would need to differentiate Direct Admit data from Prepster data in order to compare these two groups' preparation for and performance in EN 101. However, I did not know whether I would gain permission to access this information, nor did I know whether the information had been recorded or if it was accessible. Fortunately, I was able to easily gain the support of the Directors of OEMA and the USMA Office of Institutional Research (OIR) because of

the nature of my project and its potential positive impact on USMAPS and USMA. Additionally, I was fortunate in that USMA had been keeping for many years the kinds of data I was seeking, and OEMA had ready access to that information. My final stroke of good fortune stemmed from the extraordinarily helpful, responsive, and knowledge analysts of OEMA. Over the course of several meetings, they helped me refine my data requests, and once they received those requests from me, they gathered the data in an expeditious manner and sent it to me as quickly as possible, despite working on many high-priority projects for Army-level leaders.

Once I had decided to collect the quantitative data, gotten the permission to do so, and determined exactly what data I needed, the collection process was quite straightforward. Over the course of several months in early 2015, I sent several requests for data via email to OEMA, and the analysts there quickly gathered and sent the data to me. The tables in Appendix J may not look particularly impressive, but they are the result of queries involving more than 250,000 data points, and the results served an enormously important role in my project by allowing me to compare perceptions with quantifiable data directly linked to those perceptions. Once I had all of the data I needed, an iterative process because one dataset would invariably raise in my mind other questions that needed additional data, I analyzed the data as explained in the data analysis section of this chapter as well as in Chapters Five and Six. Upon the completion of getting the data from OEMA, I sent the Director and his analysts a heartfelt thank you note.

In order to make my quantitative data collection process as clear as possible, on the following page is a table containing the quantitative data I sought and received.

Table 3. Summary of Quantitative Data Queries

Data Requested	Collection Source
# students enrolled in USMAPS	OEMA
# of students (above) enrolled in USMA	OEMA
Direct Admit/Prepster USMA graduation rate	OEMA
DA/Prepster USMA GPA at graduation	OEMA
USMAPS English GPAs	OEMA and OIR
EN 101 Direct Admit/Prepster GPA	OEMA
SAT verbal quintile and EN 101 GPA	OEMA
"Just above/just below" EN 101 GPA	OEMA
Revised curriculum EN 101 GPA	OEMA and OIR

Data Analysis

Once I had collected my data, I needed to analyze that data to begin to make meaning of it. This section of my methodology chapter describes the process I used for data analysis, but that process is just the first of three such processes of analysis I used during my research project. This first process is focused on making meaning from the aggregate data I collected via the three qualitative methods of observations, interviews, and surveys—my fourth qualitative method, focus group discussion, is included in my pilot study appendix (D)—and the quantitative data collection method of database queries. As such, this first-level analysis focused on making sense of a tremendous amount of raw data through closely examining that data via careful analysis of field notes, coding, and looking for patterns, respectively, in my observations, interviews, and surveys and quantitative data. This first level of analysis led to the results of my data collection efforts, results which are contained at the beginning of Chapter Five. The

second-level data analysis is described in detail in Chapter Five, Findings and Analysis, and consisted of my closely examining the data—that I had collected and initially analyzed—in a way that led to my findings. This second analysis of the data contains a great deal of detail regarding the meaning of the data I had initially analyzed to prepare that raw data for this second analysis. The third, and final, data analysis is contained in Chapter Six—Themes, Lessons, and Contributions—and is comprised of my final examination of the analysis, with a focus on how my findings led to the themes, lessons, and contributions of my study. Although this data analysis process consisted of three fairly distinct processes, each process was certainly not entirely distinct from the others; that is, the borders among these three processes were somewhat permeable and indistinct. From my perspective as a researcher, the first-level data analysis I conducted essentially helped me organize my data, begin to draw meaning from it, and arrive at the results of my data collection efforts; the second-level analysis enabled me to systematically derive my findings from data results that I had at that point carefully considered and organized; and the third-level analysis allowed me to probe the data even more deeply to arrive at what in my mind are the most important aspects of my project: its themes, lessons, and contributions.

There were many possibly ways to organize my first-level data analysis, but for the sake of clarity and to remain consistent with the organization I used for my data collection, I organized my initial data analysis efforts by collection vehicle: observations, interviews, surveys, and database queries.

Classroom Observations

I used field notes to collect (record) the data from my four classroom observations. Because I took extensive notes during each observation, those notes ended up being fairly lengthy: approximately two to three pages of my very small handwriting per fifty minute observation. As I discussed during my data collection section, I did not use any kind of

checklist or spreadsheet during my observations but instead began taking notes at the beginning of class and continued that process throughout the class so that the flow of my notes corresponded to the flow of the class from beginning to end. While taking those notes, I focused on student engagement, whether behavioral, cognitive, or affective, and made notes of everything I found noteworthy. At the conclusion of my fourth observation, I had taken fourteen pages of detailed notes, which I then had to organize and analyze.

The process of organizing and analyzing those notes consisted of three close readings of them, during which I progressively re-organized and analyzed my observations. Although I did not use a formal system of coding to do these readings, I in effect used what Lyn Richards and Janice Morse describe in their *Qualitative Methods* as descriptive, topic, and analytic coding (149). Descriptive coding involves a first sweep of the data, when the reader is looking for patterns established by recurrent or particularly noteworthy words, terms, or phrases. Once the reader has descriptively coded the data, she can move to coding it by topic, which involves looking for general topics that emerge. Once the coding by topic is complete, the researcher can do a final sweep of what has resulted from the first two sweeps, but this time she is looking for the kinds of connections that will be useful when analyzing the data to derive findings.

For my classroom observation data, I followed this "three sweeps" technique to the letter. Over the course of many hours, I read, re-read, and read for a third time the field notes I had made during my observations. During each of those readings, I carefully looked to see what specific observations were manifestations of the kinds of student engagement I was attempting to discern, in order to ultimately determine if I could see patterns of behavior in the USMAPS students in the classes I observed that would shed any light upon whether those students had fully integrated into the USMA English classroom with their Direct Admit counterparts. As I was making each sweep of the data, I took further notes in order to make meaning of my observations. My first reading

resulted in several key words, terms, and phrases that I focused upon during my second reading. That second reading allowed me to catch two key words that I had missed during my first reading, and it also allowed me to bring my data into focus by exposing several themes. After I had completed my second sweep, I did a final sweep and was during that sweep able to feel very confident that I had very carefully examined my observations data and had not missed anything of significance; this third sweep also resulted in my being able to consolidate the field notes I had taken during my observations with the additional notes I had taken during my first two sweeps. I discuss the results of my analysis of my field notes during Chapter Five, when I explain how my data led to my findings, but suffice it to say here that that analysis was methodical and quite productive and played a key role in helping me to answer my first research question, which focused on the perceptions of faculty and students regarding student preparation for EN 101.

Interviews

I will reiterate that I ultimately conducted a total of ten individual interviews, seven of which were of USMA English faculty members and three of which were of USMAPS graduates who had recently completed EN 101. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, and I used a tightly structured set of questions for the interviews, although I certainly allowed and encouraged each respondent to respond as widely as he or she felt necessary. When I reviewed my notes from these interviews, I was surprised at how wide-ranging some of the responses were, but I was glad to see that the respondents who provided these kinds of responses felt the freedom and commitment to do so.

With respect to analyzing the data from my interviews, a key topic I had to address early in that process was whether to transcribe the interviews. In a qualitative data analysis class I took as part of my doctoral coursework, I learned a great deal about interviewing as a process, and transcription was part of that process. Moreover, I

transcribed one of the interviews I conducted as part of my pilot study and found the transcription process to be quite enlightening. However, while transcribing that interview was valuable in that I had never done a transcription and because doing it allowed me to obviously recall every detail of the interview, I ultimately found it to be something that I felt was not necessary in order to get the full value from an interview. I tape-recorded the ten individual interviews I conducted for this research, but I also took detailed handwritten notes during the interviews, and it was upon these notes that I most heavily relied for my analysis. These notes included many quotations—I have developed an ability to write in essentially a short-hand that is extremely accurate—as well as observations I recorded about the subject's demeanor, body language, and facial expressions. These notes, along with periodic references to the recordings of the interviews, enabled me to meaningfully code the interviews, as I demonstrate below.

Coding is an essential aspect of gleaning as much data as possible from an interview and as such is a data analysis technique that a great number of researchers use for this method of data collection. However, as is the case with many topics of this nature, many people mean many different things by the term "coding," so it is essential for each researcher to clearly articulate what she or he means by this word. As Richards and Morse state in *Qualitative Methods*, "In qualitative research, everyone uses the term *coding*, but different researchers mean many different things when they use that term" (149). With respect to answering this key question, they go on to say "They [coding techniques] all share the goal of getting from unstructured and messy data to ideas about what is going on in the data" (149), which I found to be a wonderful way to encapsulate exactly what happens during coding and to succinctly state the purpose of coding: making sense of the interview data. In essence, codes are labels, and these labels help the researcher comprehend the data he or she has so painstakingly gathered.

Richards and Morse's previously discussed grouping of coding into three types—descriptive, topic, and analytic—and making several sweeps of the data proved to be very

helpful when coding my interviews. I used this technique to analyze my interviews and found it to be quite helpful. However, a related but yet to be discussed topic regarding coding concerns whether to use automated assistance—normally in the form of computer software—with coding. There exist many programs for this kind of work, a very well-known one being NVivo. This name is a play on the concept of doing "in vivo" coding, which is essentially a method of coding that assigns coding terms to specific words or passages in an interview in order to stay as true as possible to the respondent's words and thoughts during the coding process. After reviewing the notes I compiled of the ten interviews I had conducted, I decided not to use any software programs because I felt that they would not add value to my coding process, and I also decided to focus my efforts upon what is often called "open coding," a term developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their foundational work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory.* This term describes the efforts of the researcher to use the aforementioned types and levels of coding—descriptive, topic, and analytic—in an open-minded, inquisitive manner, a manner that is nicely described as "the process of questioning, reflecting upon, and categorizing the actions, perspectives, and words of the actors in their study through their raw research data" (Sage) and that I believe accurately describes my coding of the interviews I conducted.

With respect to the interviews I conducted, I found the process of coding them to be rewarding and, more importantly, illuminating. I also found it quite interesting that the respondents in the two categories of interviewees I used—USMA English faculty and USMAPS graduates who had recently completed EN 101—provided answers that were largely along the same lines of reasoning and thought. I was very surprised by this phenomenon because each of the ten interviews was conducted in isolation from the others, and I do not believe that the respondents communicated with one another regarding the interviews. During my first pass of the data collected during my interviews of USMA English faculty, I did what I earlier mentioned as descriptive coding, and I

focused my efforts on noting all terms that were somehow relevant to my project of examining the perceptions of the participants regarding the effectiveness of the English program at the Prep School. I carefully sifted through the recorded interview as well as my notes and developed a list comprised of words and phrases that are either quotations from the interview or paraphrases from my notes. These words, terms, and phrases, which I listed in my notes in no particular order because they occurred in widely varying places during the interviews, are what stood out to me after doing my first sweep of the more than seven hours of interviews I conducted because of their direct connection with the perceptions of the participants regarding student preparation for EN 101. These words, terms, and phrases were obviously disconnected at this point, but in terms of descriptive coding, I was very pleased to see this much relevant information manifest itself after my initial reading of the data.

After my initial sweep of the interview data, I did a second sweep of my notes and recordings and tried to take my coding one level deeper, to perform "topic coding." During this phase of my coding, I consolidated my marginal notes and annotations—that led to the list referenced above—into workable groups, or concepts. It was at this point of my coding process that I began to see patterns emerge, and I was surprised at how important it was to pay attention to the words that I had not coded in my first pass because of the context that these "uncoded" words provided for my topic coding. In the final step of my coding for this group, I conducted "analytical" coding, in the hopes of refining even further my first two attempts and perhaps generating categories that were not initially apparent. This portion of my coding turned out to be the most difficult, due to my inability to generate as much as I would have liked in the way of additional categorization. However, I did develop two additional categories, which I provide during my discussion of my interview data during Chapter Five. Ultimately, the data analysis I performed of my interviews via coding and resultant extensive note-taking was quite fruitful and important, and it played a crucial role in helping me answer my first research

question, which asked about the perceptions of faculty and students regarding student preparation for EN 101.

Surveys

As a result of the two surveys I administered—to DEP faculty and the USMA Class of 2018—I was able to collect a great deal of data about the perceptions of these two groups regarding student preparation for EN 101. With respect to analyzing that data, I was fortunate in that although the data resulting from the survey responses numbered more than two thousand data points, all of those points were condensable into three concise tables that contained the collective responses of the three different groups who took the survey: DEP faculty, Direct Admits, and USMAPS graduates. Once I had completed administering the surveys, a colleague and I took the aggregate data and grouped it into categories that corresponded with particular questions. When the process of collating the data was complete, we put the data into the data tables, and we organized the data tables in accordance with the survey questions, the possible response, the number of each response for each question, and a weighted average score for each survey question. As stated during the data collection section, I decided to use a 1-10 scale for the survey questions, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 10 representing "strongly agree," so the possible responses to the survey questions ranged from 1-10 and were quite easy to tabulate and categorize.

Once the survey data tables had been prepared, the analysis of the data within the tables was straightforward because the data, although extremely important with respect to reflecting or at least indicating participant perceptions, were quite simple. I did not need to use any kind of statistical analysis to analyze the data because my analysis consisted of examining the data tables to see what the specific responses were to specific questions, based on the quantity of numbered responses to each question and the resultant average for each question. However, and although I did not need to use any statistical analysis

per se for my analysis of the survey results, I did examine the data tables very carefully and from many angles. For example, in addition to the weighted average for each survey question, which was important with respect to allowing me to discern the "average" feeling of the participants regarding that question, the data tables clearly showed the precise distribution of responses so that I could parse the meaning of the average scores. This parsing process took quite a bit of time and thought, and its details are contained in the following chapter, but, for example, this process enabled me to determine whether the average score for each question resulted from an evenly distributed range of scores, which would indicate a wide range of feeling about that topic, or from a tightly grouped series of responses, which would conversely indicate a narrow range of feelings about that topic. As is the case with the results of my data analysis of my observations and interviews, the detailed results of my survey analysis are in Chapter Five and demonstrate how I was able to generate my findings. However, the two surveys I administered and analyzed played an enormous role in aiding me in answering my first research question—a question focusing on perceptions regarding student preparation for EN 101—because they captured such a relatively large number of perceptions, as compared to my classroom observations and interviews.

Quantitative Data

Essentially, the second half of the data for my research project are comprised of quantitative data collected by OEMA based on a series of queries developed as a result of particular areas of interest I had. These areas stemmed from my desire to see what the quantitative data of my study showed with respect to student performance in EN 101 as measured by final course grade and as supplemented by data regarding graduation rates from USMA, graduation GPAs, incoming standardized tests scores and high school transcripts, correlations between SAT verbal scores and EN 101 GPA, correlations between a revised USMAPS English curriculum and Prepster GPAs in USMAPS

English, and correspondence between "just above" and "just below" Direct Admits and Prepsters regarding EN 101 GPAs. Although these data were extraordinarily important with respect to my project because of the wealth of relevant information they provided, they were ultimately relatively easy for OEMA to collect, collate, and send to me, and they were fairly straightforward to analyze, despite their large aggregate number: more than 250,000 data points.

Once I had decided which questions to ask regarding quantitative data, and once the OEMA analysts prepared the database queries to collect and collate that process, OEMA sent the data to me via a series of emails. OEMA did not perform any kind of statistical analysis of the data it sent me. For my research project, OEMA served as a collection vehicle—an invaluable one, certainly—but the nature of my queries did not necessitate any statistical analysis to either gather or collate the data. The data came to me in a number of tables and spreadsheets, and the tables ended up being the tools I used for most of my analysis of this data. The tables were organized by category of data—for example, I received a table containing USMA graduation rates, divided into Direct Admit and USMAPS rates, and another table displaying the correlation between SAT verbal score by quintile and EN 101 GPA of students with scores in those quintiles—and were easy to comprehend, at least in isolation. Once I had received all of this data from OEMA, I saved it in various computer files but also printed paper copies of it because I prefer to work with paper instead of computer screen.

As alluded to above and displayed in Chapter Five, each data table was simple, but that simplicity was deceiving in two respects. First, the data for any given table were normally the result of thousands of data points about complex topics, with all of the complexity normally underlying such a large collection of data concerning topics such as graduation rates and final grades in courses. Thus, a large part of the quantitative data analysis I performed involved trying to peel back the layers that came with the data in an attempt to see what the data "really" meant. As just one such example of the effort

involved in this peeling back process, the data resulting from my "just above/just below" query were initially strongly counterintuitive, and attempting to discern the reasons behind why that dataset was so different than expected ultimately involved an exploration of all kinds of related topics such as WCS and CEER scores, involvement in varsity athletics, and extracurricular activity opportunities in high school. Second, and even more challenging, was the thought involved in attempting to discern relationships among the data in a number of tables. As an example of what was involved in this process, when I received the information regarding USMAPS English GPAs in one table and the information regarding Direct Admit and USMAPS GPAs in EN 101, I had to carefully consider these two data sets with respect to similarities and dissimilarities and attempt to posit plausible theories regarding the reasons and ramifications for these relationships. Ultimately, my analysis of my quantitative data turned out to be extremely important and resulted from hours of poring over data tables seeking to establish relationships within and among the data. These efforts are explained in detail in Chapter Five, and they resulted in my being able to provide a number of strongly plausible answers regarding my second research question, which dealt with comparing the performance of Direct Admits and USMAPS students in EN 101 on the basis of their final course grades.

Trustworthiness

For any research project to have merit, it must ultimately be believable, which is to say that it must be trustworthy. This term, while not a technical one such as the ones I will discuss shortly, captures the essence of the merit of a research project: Can its audience trust what it says? This concept quickly becomes quite detailed and technical, even esoteric in some instances, but the fundamental aspect of trustworthiness is always part of the bedrock of any research project. Generally speaking, issues of trustworthiness manifest themselves based on whether the research project is quantitative or qualitative in

nature. Additionally, as I stated earlier in this chapter, some studies are considered to be of a mixed methods nature because they draw upon quantitative and qualitative data, and my study falls into this camp because it is essentially a case study that involves a great deal of quantitative as well as qualitative data.

Some researchers, as Bloomberg and Volpe highlight in their chapter on methodology (125), claim that quantitative and qualitative studies should be assessed differently for trustworthiness, and those researchers use terms such as credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability to refer to assessment measures for qualitative studies and use other terms for quantitative studies. After examining a number of discussions about this topic, I concluded that the two traditional measures of trustworthiness in a quantitative research project—validity and reliability—apply just as well to qualitative studies as to quantitative ones because these two terms, as explained in detail below, examine the fundamentals of any research project, whether qualitative or quantitative: whether the project is actually measuring what it purports to measure and whether the results of the project can be reproduced. If a study does these two things and possesses these two qualities, it is clearly logically trustworthy, regardless of the terms applied to these two qualities of a study.

Validity has many meanings—from the generic, trite phrase "that's a valid point" to the philosophical concept of validity stemming from the condition of an argument in which it is not possible for that argument's conclusion to be false while its premises are true because of the nature of the logical relationship between that conclusion and those premises—but in the context of quantitative research, validity essentially concerns the question of whether a study is measuring what it claims to measure. Robert Thorndike provides a more precise definition of validity in his seminal text *Measurement and Evaluation in Psychology and Education* when he says that when we ask about validity, "…we are inquiring whether the test measures what we want to measure, all of what we want to measure, and nothing but what we want to measure" (154). He also says that

validity "has to do with the degree to which test scores provide information that is relevant to the inferences that are to be made from them" (119).

For my research study, I have outlined earlier in this chapter the ways in which the quantitative and qualitative data I collected went a long way toward ensuring that my study possesses validity. I began with an important demarcation point with respect to studying the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students—when USMAPS significantly changed its admissions policies—and I collected almost twenty years of data, both qualitative and quantitative, stemming from that change. The data that I collected was directly relevant to key ways to measure the impact of the USMAPS English program, and I analyzed it in a number of clearly applicable ways. Additionally, the sample size consisted of every student affected by the program in question for the duration under examination.

Reliability is the second key measure of effectiveness regarding the trustworthiness of a study. In essence, reliability concerns whether the results of the study are repeatable. This measure is obviously important because worthwhile research will often spawn all kinds of related research, and it is vitally important that subsequent researchers be able to replicate the conditions of the initial study or examine the same kinds of data in the same kinds of ways in order to extend the boundaries associated with any particular research. Thorndike also provides a very useful definition of reliability when he states that "Reliability refers to the accuracy or precision of a measurement procedure" (118) and that reliability "gives an indication of the extent to which the scores produced by a particular measurement [study] are consistent and reproducible" (118).

In the case of my research project, the quantitative and qualitative data I used are quite reliable. The sample size for that quantitative data is the entire group in question, and the data are the exact scores, grades, grade point averages, survey responses, etc. applicable to that group. Any researcher could reproduce my quantitative data countless times because of the group being measured and the data being used to measure that

group. Additionally, the qualitative data I collected—via interviews, observations, and surveys—are also manifestly reproducible because of the nature of those data collection methods and the data they collected. If, for example, a researcher wants to re-visit my study and/or the topic it addresses two decades from now, he or she would still be able to interview, observe, and conduct focus group discussions with the instructors and students of that era in a manner very similar to the one I used.

Limitations and Delimitations

The final consideration regarding the methodology of my study is its limitations and delimitations. Both of these concepts deal with what is fundamentally the same issue—concerns about a research project—but they do so from different perspectives. These topics are addressed in almost all publications dealing with qualitative or quantitative research, and I did not find a particular definition of either term that was especially enlightening, so I will simply provide my definition and understanding of these terms. Limitations are those factors that negatively impact the study that are beyond the control of the researcher, while delimitations are those things that the researcher has made a conscious decision to employ in an effort to provide reasonable boundaries to the study.

Limitations

In my study, I faced six primary limitations: the response rates to my surveys, the accuracy of the replies I received to my surveys and interviews, the ways that the students and faculty behaved during my classroom observations, the small number of students I interviewed, the position of power I had with respect to the students I interviewed, and the fact that my study addresses only one institution. However, before moving to a discussion of these six points, I want to reiterate the overarching limitation I faced during

this study, and one that I address early in this chapter, in the Researcher's Role section: fundamentally, I had to be constantly aware of and act to mitigate what could understandably be called the "conflict of interest" that I faced because while I was the person doing all of the research, I was also the person who has a strong, vested interest in the outcome of that research. Clearly, as the Director of the USMAPS English program, I hope that the program I direct prepares its students well for the USMA English program; that preparation is, after all, the entire reason for my department's existence and, even more specifically, my job. If my research were to call into question the effectiveness of the department I direct, obvious important concerns would follow. My response to that legitimate concern about my conflict of interest is threefold: first, in one sense, all I can say is that I am a person of integrity who cares deeply for the department I lead but even more so for the students that department serves. Thus, I always attempt to do whatever is best for those students, and by virtue of my concern for our students, I decided very early during the process of formulating this research project that I would let the cards fall as they may so that I and our faculty could learn as much as possible from my research and adjust our program accordingly. Second, I hope that the discussion I included in the Researcher's Role section examined the specific concerns I have kept in mind in a way that reasonably addressed those concerns. Third, by the time any reader comes to the end of this dissertation, I hope that it is manifest that I conceptualized, designed, implemented, and modified this research project in ways that always remained true to my goal: determine, in the most honest, open way possible, the extent to which the USMAPS English Department has impacted its students' performance in EN 101.

With respect to the response rates to my surveys, even though I received what I have already demonstrated to be "good" and "very good" response rates, those rates were nonetheless somewhat disappointing to me, but there was nothing further I could have done to receive higher response rates. For the faculty survey, a senior member of the USMA English Department forwarded the survey to all members of the faculty, and he

included with that survey a note that was strongly supportive of my research. He then sent a reminder message to the faculty one week after his initial message, and this message reinforced the notion that my research was helpful to not only myself but ultimately to the USMA Dept. of English. However, USMA English faculty members are very busy people with many demands on their time, so receiving a fifty percent response rate was something that was ultimately quite useful but that was, again, a limitation to my study because a response rate in the eighty to ninety percent rate would have provided even stronger evidence.

A large part of my research consisted of interviews and surveys, and the worth of those research vehicles obviously depends upon the accuracy of the responses that the respondents provide. In this context, I am using the term "accuracy" to mean the memories of the respondents and the candor with which the respondents were willing to convey those memories. It is a well-known fundamental aspect of the human experience that memories can be and often are far from reality, for an enormous number of reasons; that is, respondents' retrospective recall can often be inaccurate, sometimes wildly so. Additionally, even when someone accurately remembers the topic at hand, that person may not be willing to candidly share that memory with a person inquiring about it. This unwillingness to be candid sometimes arises because of the respondent's social desirability bias to please the interviewer, a concern I obviously faced because of my personal relationship with many of the faculty and all of the students whom I interviewed. In my research project, I had to rely upon my subjects both to have accurate memories and to candidly share those memories, and there was no way for me to assess how well they met both of those challenges. As I stated earlier, I did everything possible to create a trusting, warm environment during my interviews and to ask questions during those interviews and on the surveys that were non-threatening, and I also stressed to the participants I was interviewing the need for their candor, but I have no way of knowing how well I succeeded in my endeavor to elicit accurate, candid responses.

For the classroom observations I conducted, my presence in those classrooms was "the elephant in the room," even though I was a non-participatory observer and simply took notes. It is reasonable to believe that my presence somehow affected the behavior of both students and instructors in those classrooms, but I can say that based on almost two decades of teaching in very similar classes, I did not notice anything during my observations that was remotely close to unusual. Thus, I am confident that what I saw in those classrooms is very close to, if not the same as, what happened in them when I was not present. However, looking back at the observations I conducted, I wish that I had asked a colleague who had no vested interest my study—perhaps an acquaintance from an academic department at West Point, other than DEP—to either observe the classes simultaneously with me or to observe them at a different time so that we could compare notes about our observation in order for me to ascertain whether I had missed important events during my observations or had somehow conducted them in a non-objective manner. This mechanism would have reduced the limitations regarding my class observations and thus strengthened my study. Additionally, even though I have explained why I did not use a checklist or table for my observations, I believe that I should have more carefully considered exactly the kinds of behaviors and engagement I was looking for during my observations and how I would recognize and record those behaviors if I observed them.

While the number of USMA faculty I interviewed—seven—was quite reasonable, given that there are only forty-two faculty in the USMA English Department, the fact that I interviewed only three former Prepsters could be cause for concern. However, mitigating that concern is the fact that I conducted a survey about Plebes' perceptions of their degree of preparation for USMA English that was answered by almost forty percent of the USMAPS graduates in that group—79 of the 201 Prepsters who were Plebes responded to the survey—and that the focus group I conducted was in essence a group interview of five other Plebe USMAPS graduates. Additionally, the three students I

interviewed represented the range of USMAPS students by virtue of having been a strong, average, and weak performer, respectively, in USMAPS English as well as by being quite diverse in a number of other ways, as I discussed in detail in this chapter's Data Collection section. Despite these mitigating factors, though, were I to conduct these interviews again, I would simply make time to interview at least seven or eight students so that I would have a larger sample size, with all of the attendant strengths that come with that kind of sample.

Before and during the interviews and focus group discussion I conducted, I was acutely aware that I was in a position of power vis-à-vis the students with whom I was interacting. That kind of relationship will always impact discussions involving people having those respective power positions, but the potentially compromising aspects of those positions can be greatly lessened via a variety of methods. In my case, I tried very hard to be a calm, professional presence during the interviews and focus group discussion, and I began that attempt in the way that I contacted the students, which was via email—so the students were not intimidated by my physical presence—and continued when I met the students. During those meetings, I thanked the students for taking the time to participate; told them very clearly that everything they said would be not for attribution; and, most importantly, conducted the sessions in a friendly, engaging manner. These measures led to what seemed to me to be open, honest sessions, but, again, I am fully cognizant that my perceptions of those interactions are not necessarily the same as those of the students. Moreover, if I were to conduct another round of interviews or focus group discussion, I would ensure that I interviewed students who were not former students of mine in order to try to reduce the influence of a past relationship, and I would also ask a disinterested colleague of mine to conduct several of the interviews so that I could compare the types of responses she/he received with the ones I had received.

The final limiting factor of my study was the fact that it was based on only one school. For the most important aspect of my study—attempting to determine the extent of

the success the USMAPS English program has had in preparing its students for the USMA English program—this limitation is of no concern, but it is of concern with respect to the transferability of my findings, conclusions, and recommendations to other institutions. While my foremost concern is my institution, USMAPS, and my parent institution, USMA, I certainly would hope that this study would have some degree of applicability to other institutions, particularly institutions engaged in preparing under-served students for high-level, rigorous undergraduate education. Although my study is based on only one institution and its parent institution, there are many similarities between what my school is doing to prepare students for its parent institution and what all preparatory schools are doing to prepare their students for the next level of education, and it is these similarities that mitigate the limited focus of my study.

Delimitations

In terms of delimiting my study, the topic I decided to investigate—the impact of the USMAPS English program on its graduates—was wide-ranging and ultimately concerned a task notoriously difficult to accomplish: program evaluation. Additionally, the avenues I could have explored were initially paralyzing in their number and complexity. Thus, I had to make three important decisions regarding ways to delimit my study in order to be able to conduct a study that was meaningful but also feasible. The first of those decisions was to consider only those students enrolling at USMAPS from 1995 and later. This group still consisted of almost twenty years' worth of enrollment, but restricting my examination to this timeframe allowed me to deal with a sizeable but not overwhelming number of subjects. The second delimiting decision I made concerned the number of interviews, observations, and focus group discussions I conducted. As things turned out, I ended up conducting ten interviews, four classroom observations, and one focus group discussion. I would have liked to conduct more iterations of all of these events, but I quickly learned that coordinating, conducting, and analyzing each one of

these events was quite time consuming, so I had to restrict myself to what seemed to be a reasonable number of these kinds of data collection events, with reasonable being defined as sufficient to gain credible access to the information of interest while still feasible to manage in terms of my time and energy. As I said above, though, upon further reflection, I should simply have made time to increase the number of student interviews I conducted because that sample size is the one glaring weakness this study has with respect to sample sizes.

The third delimiting decision I made dealt with my quantitative data. I knew early in my research process that I would have access to an enormous of amount of data relevant to my study, but two delimiting factors again quickly manifested themselves: my time and energy and the time and energy of those gathering and collating the data for me. Because of these considerations, I restricted the queries I developed to only those topics that I was quite confident were particularly valuable for my study. As it was, my queries led to data collection efforts that gathered a large amount of quantitative data, but, thanks to the expertise of my data collectors and the miracles of modern computing, these efforts did not demand an exorbitant amount of time or energy from the collectors. Additionally, the results of these collection efforts were so neatly packaged, due to the specific guidance I had provided to the collectors and their ingenuity in packaging the data, that I did not have to spend an inordinate amount of time or energy to make meaning of them.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the journey I undertook to first decide how to conduct the research for my project and then how to actually conduct that research. During that account, I have tried to strike a proper balance between providing meaningful insights and sufficient details, on the one hand, but not relating an overwhelming amount of information, on the other hand. This story of my research

methodology includes concerns about my role as the researcher; the rationale for ultimately deciding that I would conduct a mixed methods case study; a detailed description of the research sample I used; an account of the information I needed in order to conduct my study; a summary of the research design I ended up using; discussion of my IRB approval process; an in-depth analysis of the data collection methods I utilized; a close examination of how I analyzed the data I had collected; what measures I took to attempt to make my study as trustworthy as possible; and, finally, what steps I implemented to account for the limitations inherent in that study and to delimit my study. At this point, I hope that my reader has a thorough understanding of all of these aspects of my research methodology, and it is time to turn to the next chapter in this study, a chapter that provides an in-depth examination of how I analyzed the data I collected in order to arrive at the findings of this study.

Chapter V

THE PATH: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND RESULTANT FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter provides the second of the three levels of analysis this study outlines in its methodology chapter. This second level of analysis shows how the results stemming from the first level of analysis were further analyzed to lead to this chapter's findings. The third level of analysis occurs in Chapter Six, when this study's findings are analyzed via five themes, a process that results in key lessons and contributions of this research project. Following this overview are sections on the definition and nature of findings and analysis; a summary of the data results stemming from the Chapter Four first-level analysis of the data collection efforts of this study, along with a table of those data results; this study's seven findings; and a detailed explanation of how a second-level analysis of this study's data led to those findings.

Definition and Nature of Findings and Analysis

To determine findings is a crucial intermediate step of almost all research projects, and the term is used liberally in widely varying types of research. Very often, the term is not defined in these accounts, and when it is defined, it is given a wide variety of definitions. For this study, the best definition of the term "finding" is one of the simplest in the literature: a finding is a result; however, this "result" is very different from the "results" of the first level of data analysis. Those results are contained throughout this

chapter, in narrative and tabular form. Meanwhile, the second-level analysis of the data is what leads to the findings results. This definition of a finding is in Richards and Morse's *Qualitative Methods* (78), and it cuts to the heart of the matter. In other words, findings are simply results that stem directly from a second-level analysis of the data: nothing more, and nothing less. Findings do not make any judgments or offer any recommendations, but they do serve as the basis for the third-level analysis that makes meaning of the findings and that ultimately leads to conclusions and recommendations.

As was the case with findings, analysis is a somewhat amorphous concept with many definitions, but for this research project, Robert Yin's definition in *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* serves quite well: "[A]nalysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of the study" (109). Yin's definition fits all three levels of analysis in this research project so well because it comprehensively but succinctly addresses all of the steps that this study takes regarding the data at its foundation, and Yin explicitly states a noteworthy feature of this project: its extensive use of qualitative as well as quantitative data.

In addition to considering the definition of analysis, it is well worth considering the specific types of analysis that this study employs because there were a number of types available, and the ones selected greatly impacted the progression of this project. Yin covers three general methods of analysis—relying on theoretical propositions, thinking about rival explanations, and developing a case description (111-14)—and asserts that "The first and most preferred strategy" (111) is relying on theoretical propositions because "the original objectives and designs of the case study presumably were based on such propositions, which in turn reflected a set of research questions, reviews of the literature, and new hypotheses or propositions" (111-2). In the case of this research project, the theoretical propositions are two in number and are ultimately contained in and articulated via the conceptual framework, itself a two-fold entity addressed in detail

in this study's Introduction as an input, intervention, output model as well as a model based on the values underlying the mission of USMAPS: the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

With respect to the specific analytic techniques that this study employed, Yin addresses two such techniques that lie at the center of this study's analysis of its findings: pattern matching and logic models (116, 127). The first technique, pattern matching, "compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one" (116). In the case of this project, the empirically based pattern was fundamentally the performance of USMAPS graduates in EN 101, in a qualitative and quantitative sense, and the predicted—examined, in this study—pattern was what impact the USMAPS English program had on that performance. The second technique, logic models, also played a key role in the analysis of the findings because it prompted me to "match empirically observed events to theoretically predicted events" (127). The specific logic model that underlay this research project was one conceived as examining empirically observed events—Cadets Candidates' performance in EN 101—in light of their theoretically predicted performance: performance enhanced by the USMAPS English program.

Research Questions

The driving force behind almost any research project is that project's research questions. My questions led to the data collection efforts this study conducted and the resultant data and initial analysis of that data, a subsequent analysis of which in turn led to the findings of this research project, findings that are analyzed in upcoming sections of this chapter. Chapter One introduced these questions, which were re-introduced in the Methodology chapter and bear repeating again, here:

- Research Question One: How do USMA Department of English and Philosophy (DEP) faculty, Direct Admits, and former USMAPS students

perceive others' or their own preparation for EN 101, as measured through interviews, classroom observations, surveys, and a focus group discussion?

- Research Question Two: How do USMAPS graduates perform in EN 101 with respect to their Direct Admit counterparts when the two groups are compared on the basis of final course grades?
- Research Question Three: How do the perceptions from RQ1 compare with the performance from RQ2?
- Research Question Four: To what extent can any of the results stemming from Research Questions One through Three be determined to arise from students' experience in the USMAPS English program?

These research questions led to data collection and analysis efforts—described in detail in the methodology chapter—that resulted in a very large amount of data relevant to this project. These data took the form of detailed interview responses from fifteen participants—seven USMA English faculty members and eight cadets (three individuals and five focus group members)—four, hour-long class observations; survey responses from half of the USMA Department of English and Philosophy faculty and from almost forty percent of the entire USMA Class of 2018; and more than a quarter million data points from numerous data queries conducted by the Office of Economic Manpower Analysis (OEMA) and focused on Direct Admit and USMAPS graduates' performance in USMA English courses, especially EN 101. All of this information is contained within this chapter, and relevant portions of it are closely examined in conjunction with the analysis of each finding in this chapter and the following, final chapter as appropriate.

Findings

This study resulted in seven findings, each of which is described below.

Finding One

Based on their interview and survey responses and actions in the classroom, USMA English instructors believed USMAPS graduates to be well prepared for EN 101 and on par with their Direct Admit counterparts. This finding stems from the clear indications that these instructors did not perceive there to be a noticeable difference between the quality of the work of Direct Admits and that of Prepsters. Additionally, these faculty did not perceive there to be a measurable difference in the amount of work they devoted to their Prepster vs. their Direct Admit students, whether that work took place in the classroom while teaching or in the office while grading papers and examinations or meeting with students. Ultimately, most USMA English faculty viewed their students as "students," not Direct Admit students or Prepster students, because there were no distinguishable differences between these two groups.

Finding Two

Based on their interviews, focus group discussion, and survey results, USMAPS graduates perceived themselves to be well prepared for EN 101. Across all three of these assessment vehicles, USMAPS graduates consistently considered themselves to be ready to succeed in USMA freshman composition. Additionally, there was very little variation across these three kinds of assessments regarding the degree to which USMAPS graduates felt prepared for EN 101. Fundamentally, the feelings of USMAPS graduates paralleled those of Direct Admits with respect to both groups' preparation for freshman English, and both groups felt prepared.

Finding Three

USMAPS students consistently had slightly lower GPAs—an average of approximately .25-.30 on a four point scale, or approximately one-third of a letter grade—in EN 101 than the GPAs of Direct Admits. Although the variation varies from year to year, ranging from a largest difference of .59 for the USMA Class of 2015 to a smallest of 0 for the USMA Class of 2001, most years exhibited a difference ranging from .25 to .30. This GPA is based on the average of the final course grades in EN 101 for USMAPS graduates and Direct Admits.

Finding Four

USMAPS "just below" students—those who were just below the threshold for direct admission to USMA and who had SAT verbal scores in the middle tercile of their USMAPS class—had slightly lower GPAs in EN 101 than did the Direct Admit "just above" students: those who were just above the threshold for direct admission to USMA and had SAT verbal scores in the bottom fifth of their USMA class. The difference in these GPAs varied from year to year, and in six of the twenty years studied, the Prepster GPA was in fact slightly higher than the 'just above" Direct Admit GPA. However, the Direct Admits ultimately had a somewhat higher GPA than that of the Prepsters over the course of the time period studied, a result that was initially surprising and that turned out to be quite important.

Finding Five

Students who had studied under the revised USMAPS English curriculum put into effect for Academic Year (AY) 2012-2013 and AY 2013-2014 had an EN 101 GPA .17 higher than those USMAPS students who had studied under the English curriculum in effect for the two academic years prior to the revised curriculum: AY 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. This finding occurred within a context of both sets of USMAPS students—the two classes learning with the revised English curriculum and the two classes learning

with the English curriculum in effect immediately prior to the revised curriculum—being quite similar in entering qualifications as well as an EN 101 course that changed little during the period under examination.

Finding Six

There exists a close connection between USMA English faculty and USMAPS student perception of USMAPS student preparation for EN 101 and corresponding USMAPS student performance in EN 101. Ultimately, the perceptions of USMA English faculty and the perceptions of USMAPS students regarding the preparation of USMAPS students for EN 101 were quite close to the reality of that performance as measured by final grades in that course.

Finding Seven

This study was unable to definitively determine the extent to which the performance of USMAPS students in EN 101 is attributable to the USMAPS English program. The analysis of this finding will explore its many ramifications in great detail, but this finding resulted from an inability to isolate the variable of the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students. In other words, this research project found that it was not possible to determine with any degree of certainty the value-added of the USMAPS English program in terms of how the students who underwent the intervention of the USMAPS English program would have performed had they been admitted directly to USMA and not undergone that intervention.

Data Results Summary

The data analysis section of this chapter examines all of the data collected via this study comprehensively and in great detail so that the key results—"what" the data collection efforts provided—are thoroughly analyzed. However, this study was complex

with respect to its scope and breadth—involving as it did not only qualitative data collected via the four vehicles of observations, interviews, surveys, and a focus group but also a great deal of quantitative data—so summarizing all of those data results in one place will help bring all of that data into sharp focus. In order to provide that summary in the clearest, most concise manner possible, I have placed it into the table on the following page. This table organizes the data by data collection method and resultant data.

Table 4. Data Results Summary

Data Collection Vehicle	**Resultant Data**
7 DEP faculty interviews	App. 7 hours tape-recorded perceptions of student preparation for EN 101
3 USMAPS student interviews	App. 3 hours tape-recorded perceptions of student preparation for EN 101
4 observations of DEP classrooms	App. 4 hours-worth of notes of observations
1 DEP faculty survey (21 of 42 faculty members)	Quantifiable faculty perceptions (survey results) of student preparation for EN 101
1 student survey (291 of 899 Direct Admits)	Quantifiable Direct Admit perceptions (survey results) of their preparation for EN 101
1 student survey (79 of app. 198 USMAPS students)	Quantifiable Prepster perceptions (survey results) of their preparation for EN 101
Focus group discussion (5 USMAPS students)	App. one hour tape-recorded perceptions of student preparation for EN 101
OEMA database queries	More than 250,000 data points regarding USMAPS English GPAs, DA/Prepster EN 101 GPAs, SAT verbal correlation with EN 101 GPAs, "just above/just below" EN 101 GPAs, and Prepster EN 101 GPAs reference "before" and "after" USMAPS English curricula

Analysis of Data

The analysis section of this chapter will commence with two tables. The first table depicts the linkage between this project's research questions and its findings so that this crucial relationship is readily apparent, while the second table depicts the relationship between each finding and the data that led to that finding. Following these tables is a thorough examination of each finding in turn—beginning with Finding One and moving sequentially to Finding Seven—that clearly demonstrates how this study's data led to that finding. This analysis is one of the most important parts of this entire project because it details exactly how various kinds of data—from observations, interviews, surveys, and a focus group to a wealth of quantitative data—combined to lead to one of this study's foundations: its findings. This second-level analysis in turn serves as the basis for this project's arguably most important claims: its conclusions and recommendations.

This study's seven findings stemmed from its four research questions. Three of the four research questions led to multiple findings, with the remaining research question leading to one finding. On the following page is the table mentioned above that depicts the relationship between these research questions (RQ) and findings (F). Each research question and corresponding finding is single-spaced in the interest of conserving space, but each entry is nonetheless clearly legible. Additionally, although it was possible to list only the designations of the corresponding research questions and findings—i.e., list only the "RQ" and "F" designations without listing the accompanying verbiage—in order to conserve even more space, re-stating the research questions and findings in their entirety greatly amplified clarity, a trade-off well worth it.

Table 5. This Study's Research Questions and Related Findings

RQ 1: How do USMA Department of English and Philosophy (DEP) faculty, Direct Admits, and former USMAPS students perceive others' or their own preparation for EN 101 as measured through interviews, classroom observations, surveys, and a focus group discussion?	F1: Based on their interview and survey responses and actions in the classroom, USMA English instructors believe USMAPS graduates to be well prepared for EN 101 and on par with their Direct Admit counterparts. F2: Based on their interviews, focus group discussion, and survey results, USMAPS graduates feel themselves to be well prepared for EN 101.
RQ 2: How do USMAPS graduates perform in EN 101 with respect to their Direct Admit counterparts when the two groups are compared on the basis of final course grades?	F3: USMAPS students consistently have slightly lower GPAs—an average of approximately .3 on a four point scale, or approximately one-third of a letter grade—in EN 101 than the GPAs of Direct Admits. F4: USMAPS "just below" students—those with SAT verbal scores in the middle tercile of their USMAPS class that were just below the threshold for direct admission to USMA—have barely lower GPAs in EN 101 than do the Direct Admit "just above" students: those with SAT verbal scores in the bottom fifth of their USMA class that were just above the threshold for direct admission to USMA.
RQ 3: How do the aforementioned performance and perceptions compare when measured with respect to one another?	F6: There exists a close connection between USMA English faculty and USMAPS student perception of USMAPS student performance in EN 101 and corresponding USMAPS student performance in EN 101.
RQ4: To what extent can any of the results stemming from Research Questions One through Three be determined to arise from students' experience in the USMAPS English program?	F5: Students who studied under the revised USMAPS English curriculum put into effect for Academic Year (AY) 2013-2014 and AY 2014-2015 had an EN 101 GPA .17 higher than those USMAPS students who had studied under the English curriculum in effect for the two academic years prior to the revised curriculum. F7: This study was unable to definitively determine the extent to which the performance of USMAPS students in EN 101 is attributable to the USMAPS English program.

The following table depicts the relationship between the findings—all of which are listed immediately after the table—and the data behind each finding.

Table 6. Findings and Underlying Data

Finding	Underlying Data
Finding One (DEP faculty perceptions)	Faculty interviews and surveys; my observations
Finding Two (student perceptions)	Student interviews, focus group, and surveys; my observations
Finding Three (DA/Prep. EN 101 GPA)	OEMA database query
Finding Four ("just above/just below")	OEMA database query
Finding Five (revised USMAPS English curriculum)	OEMA and IRAB database queries
Finding Six (connection between perceptions and quantitative data)	My analysis of relevant data
Finding Seven (cannot definitively attribute performance to USMAPS English program)	My analysis of relevant data

Analysis of the Data Leading to Each Finding

The next portion of the data analysis section contains a detailed analysis of each finding with respect to how specific data collected via a combination of all five collection vehicles combined to lead to the finding in question.

Finding One. The first finding of this research project is that USMA English instructors perceive that USMAPS students perform satisfactorily in EN 101 and on roughly the same level as their Direct Admit counterparts. The data that form the basis for this finding stem from my very close examination of my notes—as detailed in the data analysis section of the methodology chapter—of these instructors' responses during interviews and to a survey, in addition to their observed behaviors in the classroom. For this study, seven USMA English instructors were interviewed. These instructors were

diverse with respect to their experience teaching EN 101—some had taught this course for almost two decades, while one had taught it only one year; their gender—five males and two females; and their background—five military officers and two civilians. Each interview lasted for approximately sixty to seventy minutes, and all interviews were recorded. One interview was transcribed word-for-word, and the remaining six were methodically and very carefully reviewed. The interview questions for all seven interviews follow:

1. How long have you been teaching at West Point?
2. Do you know how many Prepsters you have had in each section (class), on average?
3. In the classroom, do you notice which students are USMAPS graduates?
4. Do you find any noteworthy differences between the performance of your Prepsters and your Direct Admits, in terms of reading, writing, or speaking?
5. Do you recall the extent to which you have to work with Prepsters as opposed to how much time you devote to Direct Admits?
6. Have you formed any general impressions of how well the USMAPS English program has prepared its students for the USMA English program?
7. Is there anything that you would like to add to this interview at this time?

Prior to conducting these interviews, I had no idea what to expect with respect to instructors' perceptions about their USMAPS students' performance in EN 101. I had heard a number of complaints over the years from faculty—English faculty and faculty from departments other than English—about "Prepsters" and their lack of preparation for college-level work, but those comments had always been in passing and without any details. I had also heard, again in passing, a number of comments praising Prepsters for their participation in class, maturity, work ethic, and overall contributions to the classroom. Because of the contradictory nature of those comments, I was understandably prepared for a wide range of comments from the faculty I interviewed.

What emerged from the interviews, though, was an almost uniformly positive perception of USMAPS students in the EN 101 classroom. As part of my interview instructions, I had made it clear that the worth of these interviews depended in large part upon the candor of the respondent. Additionally, experience had taught me that USMA instructors tend to be quite frank and are not afraid to lavish praise on students but also to sternly criticize those same students when necessary, so I had understandable expectations that the interviews would be marked by candid responses. The first interview question—concerning length of time teaching EN 10—has already been addressed, and upcoming responses indicate that this variable was of little importance. The second question elicited the general response that most instructors had had two to four Prepsters in their EN 101 sections of roughly sixteen students, a number on par with the total Prepster population of approximately fifteen to twenty percent of the student body.

Responses to the third question marked the beginning of the most important portion of these interviews. Tellingly, all seven instructors replied that they "really didn't notice which students were Prepsters and which weren't." Three instructors used these exact words, and the remaining four instructors used very similar phrases. The important point about this set of responses is that, when asked this question, all seven respondents very quickly gave the same or essentially the same response: nothing about my students during class made me consider, for better or worse, which students were Prepsters and which were not. Thus, on the one hand, USMAPS students did not shine in the classroom in a way that put them in a positive light. However, on the other hand, these same students did not bring attention to themselves in a manner reflective of not being able to handle themselves and the material well.

With respect to the fourth interview question, concerning instructors noticing any noteworthy differences between Prepsters and Direct Admits with respect to reading, writing, and speaking, all seven again replied that, basically, they did not notice such

differences. One instructor did, however, note that with respect to reading and writing, Prepsters did on average have a "bit" more difficulty grasping complicated texts and composing insightful analysis. On the other end of the spectrum, though, another instructor responded that "My Prepsters were quite strong in class discussions and often led the way in this regard." As the quantitative data indicate, four of the seven interviewed instructors said that they recalled their Prepsters' grades being "somewhat" lower than those of their Direct Admit students, but "not noticeably lower."

One "urban myth" at USMA is the notion that Prepsters require an inordinate amount of instructors' time and energy as they attempt to bring these students up to speed in their classes. Interestingly, this notion did not manifest itself during any of the seven interviews. Faculty at USMA are almost always among the highest rated in the nation in terms of accessibility and devotion to their students, and many faculty make Herculean efforts to help their students perform their best. However, this kind of effort is obviously draining, and an understandable concern is that faculty not spend an inordinate amount of time and energy on any student in particular, on students in general, or—in this case—on any certain class of students: Prepsters. The fifth interview question revealed that, while USMA English faculty do spend a great deal of time marking papers, conducting conferences, and giving Additional Instruction—individual help—none of the faculty interviewed for this study remembered devoting an inordinate amount of their time in or out of class to USMAPS students. One instructor did say that "Prepsters tend to come to AI more than do Direct Admits," and another instructor stated that "I do normally end up spending more time grading my Prepsters' papers," but neither of these instructors found these efforts to be markedly different than the efforts they gave to their Direct Admits. Conversely, a third instructor said that "My Prepsters' papers are usually better organized than those of my Direct Admits, so they require less time to grade," and this same instructor also claimed that "I wish my Direct Admits were as eager to get extra help as my Prepsters are." Thus, the gist of these instructors' feelings about how much time they

have to devote to their USMAPS students as compared to their Direct Admit students is that there exists no noteworthy difference, a conclusion that is important in that it reinforces the feeling that Prepsters are performing on par or close to par with their Direct Admit counterparts.

Concerning any general impressions that these instructors had formed regarding how well the USMAPS English program had prepared their USMAPS students—the focus of the sixth interview question—the consensus was one word: "well." All seven instructors remarked that they were aware, to varying degrees, that USMAPS students went to USMAPS instead of directly to USMA because they needed to improve their "academics," so they had a general feeling that those students might present more of a challenge in class. However, the discussion of the preceding five questions demonstrates that these instructors ended up viewing their Prepsters in much the same light as they viewed their Direct Admits, and every instructor interviewed stated that he or she had to believe that the USMAPS English program was preparing its students well for the next level of English. One instructor commented that "My Prepsters refer back to their USMAPS English class frequently" and added that "The program seems to cover all of the bases." Another instructor said that "The [USMAPS English] program is obviously working," while another claimed that "The USMAPS students seem well prepared when they walk in the door."

Thus, based on their responses during more than seven hours of focused interviews, USMA English instructors strongly indicate that they perceive USMAPS students to be performing satisfactorily in EN 101 and generally on par with their Direct Admit counterparts. Given that Prepsters are often sitting next to high school valedictorians and salutatorians in class, this perception is noteworthy. Perhaps the most powerful evidence regarding the topic of Prepster preparation for EN 101 came during an interview during which the instructor said that "My perceptions of Prepsters had been formed during my service on the Admissions Committee [note: three of the seven instructors interviewed

had served on this committee, so this comment is non-attributable], and that experience led me to believe that Prepsters were going to have great difficulty at USMA. However, I later found much to my surprise that I couldn't distinguish the two groups of students, and in fact those students whom I had thought to be Prepsters [because of their weak performance] were actually Direct Admits, and those I thought were Direct Admits [because of their strong performance] were Prepsters."

The second major vehicle used to determine USMA English faculty perceptions regarding the preparation of Prepsters for USMAPS English was a survey distributed to the entire DEP faculty. At the time this survey was provided to the faculty, I sent an accompanying email with it stating that all results would be anonymous and that there was absolutely no pressure to reply; a senior member of the USMA English Dept. forwarded the survey to the faculty and reiterated the points I had made in my email. The English faculty numbered forty-two at the time of the survey, and twenty-one members responded, a fifty percent response rate and a pleasant surprise, given the hectic nature of the faculty's schedule. The faculty took the survey via an online instrument, and no attribution of responses was made. The survey questions themselves—despite their low number and apparent simplicity—were developed over the course of six to eight hours of conversations with colleagues and trial runs, and the intent of the questions was to afford English faculty the opportunity to quickly but comprehensively and clearly articulate their perceptions regarding how well Prepsters were performing in their EN 101 class. Table 2 provides the survey questions as well as the tabulated responses of English faculty to those questions. The respondents were asked to provide an answer ranging from 1 to 10 for each question, with 1 being strongly disagree and 10 being strongly agree; this scale is in the left-most column of the table. The numbers in the columns under each question represent the number of faculty who gave that response to that particular score number, 1-10. A few faculty did not provide responses to a few of the

survey questions, an omission which is denoted with a 0 for the response. Additionally, the average score for each question is contained on the bottom line of the table.

Note: All of the quantitative data in this chapter were provided by OEMA

Table 7. Responses of the USMAPS English Faculty to the Survey Questions

Survey Questions	I am aware of which students in my EN101 sections are Prepsters	My students who are Prepsters have more difficulty with my EN101 class than do Direct Admits	My students who are Prepsters require an inordinate amount of my time
10	1	0	0
9	3	1	0
8	2	0	2
7	1	4	3
6	3	2	3
5	3	9	5
4	0	1	1
3	6	3	6
2	1	1	0
1	1	0	1
Average score	5.4	5.2	4.9

(n = 21 of 42 possible)

The results of the survey are notable in several regards. First, a fifty percent response rate from a sample of forty-two is statistically significant, according to a longtime math instructor colleague of mine, so the twenty one responses can be deemed representative of the sample itself—the USMA English faculty—and the fact that the sample size was greater than twenty nine means that it can be analyzed for statistical significance (Heiney), although no such analysis was necessary in this case. Second, with respect to instructors' awareness of which of their students are USMAPS students, the heart of the responses ranged from 3 to 9 (18 of 21 possible responses), with the most frequent response being 3 (6 of 21 possible responses). Essentially, instructors replied that they are "somewhat" aware of which of their students are Prepsters, but certainly not

strongly so. Third, in terms of rating the difficulty their Prepster students had with their class, the responses again indicate a perception of "to some degree, but not marked," based on their responses. These responses had a clear center of gravity between 5 and 7, given that almost three-quarters (15 of 21) of the responses were in this narrow range. Thus, instructors are stating that the majority of them, 9, feel neutrally about this question by virtue of their response of 5, and the majority of the remainder of the instructors tended to agree somewhat with this statement while a minority disagreed with it. Fourth, USMA English instructors gave their most favorable response regarding their perceptions of their USMAPS students when they answered fairly clearly that these students do not require an inordinate amount of their time. Over half of respondents answered this question in the neutral to disagree portion of the scoring range, and only two instructors responded with above a 7, and both of these were just one point above that level, at 8.

Based on this analysis of instructors' responses to this department-wide survey, the data strongly indicate that USMA English instructors feel that students are performing reasonably well in EN 101 and in a comparable fashion to their Direct Admit students. This point will be addressed in detail in the analysis of Finding Three, but USMA English instructors also seem to feel that all of their students, Prepsters and Direct Admits alike, are performing reasonably well in EN 101, based on the distribution of the grades they award in this course, a B- average that will be discussed shortly. A final point indicating that the survey results point towards a feeling of general satisfaction of English faculty with their USMAPS students is that all three questions in the survey had averages ranging from 4.9 to 5.4, a range of scores strongly leaning toward a neutral feeling on the part of faculty with respect to whether their Prepsters stood out within their sections, whether they had any more difficulty with the class than did their Direct Admit counterparts, and whether they needed an inordinate amount of time from their instructors.

The final part of the analysis of Finding One concerns my perceptions of instructor behavior in the four EN 101 classrooms I observed as part of this study. These

observations lasted the entire period—fifty-five minutes—and were coordinated ahead of time with the instructors. The instructors were again diverse with respect to experience, gender, and civilian or military status, and I was a non-participant observer. As discussed in the data analysis section of the methodology chapter, I did not record the classroom dialogue but did take copious field notes regarding instructor and student behavior, and these notes were the source of my analysis below. The intent of this portion of this project was to determine if USMAPS students stood out in any way during classroom interactions from their Direct Admit counterparts. Admittedly, both students and instructors could have been influenced by my presence, even though I was a non-participant observer and had coordinated the observation ahead of time with the instructor. However, based on my twelve years' experience teaching in USMA English classrooms, all four classrooms seemed quite "normal" and unaffected by my presence.

The single, and important, result—and one that will appear again, during the discussion of Finding Two—of these observations was that in all four classrooms, Prepsters were indistinguishable from Direct Admits based on my close observations of, and field notes regarding, them with respect to their behavioral, cognitive, and affective engagement as discussed in Chapter Four. The impetus behind these observations was to see if Prepsters were identifiable as a group because of any observed behaviors such as attentiveness, comprehension of the material, participation in the classroom dialogue, and interactions with their peers and instructor. Prior to conducting these observations, I had heard from a number of sources that Prepsters were sometimes reluctant to participate in class because they were having trouble comprehending the material or that, on the other hand, they asked an inordinate number of questions in an attempt to better understand the material.

As things turned out, though, all four classrooms had the same kind of mixture of voluble and quiet, energetic and tired, and intense and nonchalant students, and no group of students stood out from any other group or category. After reading and re-reading my

field notes several times, it became readily apparent that no such distinguishing behaviors were present within any of the four classrooms I observed. My field notes contain example after example of certain students saying certain things certain numbers of time, and of individual students interacting within a group in a specific way, and of particular students agreeing or disagreeing with certain other students on specified occasions, among many other specific observations. However, the bottom line is that my careful analysis of my notes revealed nothing to distinguish any group of students from any other group. Ultimately, I walked into each classroom knowing that it contained at least one USMAPS student but not knowing how many or which students were in that category, and I departed those same classrooms having no idea which students were Direct Admits or Prepsters, even after very deliberate observation of their engagement over the course of almost an hour per observation.

Moreover, none of the four observed instructors seemed to interact at all differently with any groupings of students, based on any discernible criteria. In fact, all four instructors I observed interacted well with their students. They had a nice rapport with their students, and the students seemed to enjoy being in class, based on their attentiveness and body language. It certainly was not apparent, at all, that any instructor treated any student or group—Prepster or Direct Admit—any differently than any other student or group. These conclusions are worth noting because they indicate that USMAPS students really do not stand out in any way—favorably or unfavorably—during class and that their instructors appear to perceive them as "normal" students, an assessment borne out by the interview and survey responses. This conclusion is important because it lends credence to the notion that while USMAPS students are not, generally speaking, shining or hiding in the shadows in the classroom, neither are Direct Admit students, and the key point is that Prepsters certainly are not perceived by their instructors as being troublesome or in trouble with respect to handling the rigorous composition course that is EN 101. Thus, an analysis of instructor interview and surveys as well as

classroom observations reveals that DEP instructors perceive very little, if any, difference between Prepsters and Direct Admits with respect to preparation for EN 101.

Finding Two. The second finding is that USMAPS graduates perceive themselves to be well prepared for EN 101, based on their responses during interviews and on a wide-scale survey and my perceptions of their engagement during four classroom observations and my careful analysis of the notes I took about the interviews and observations and of the survey responses. The interviews were conducted of eight USMAPS graduates, three as individuals and five as a group, and the survey was administered to the entire Plebe class of 2018, just over 1100 Cadets. The observations took place during the spring of 2012 and spring of 2015. For the individual interviews, three USMAPS graduates were interviewed individually during the spring of 2014, at the end of their Plebe year. All three students were former students of mine, and I selected them because I knew them to be representative of their USMAPS classmates in many important ways. Two are African American, and one is Caucasian; two are males, and one is female; one is a recruited athlete; two have no military background; one is from the South, one from the mid-Atlantic, and one from the West; two are outgoing, and one is reserved; one went to a very strong high school, one attended a solid high school, and one graduated from a very weak high school; one loved English, one tolerated it, and one disliked it; one performed quite well in my class, one performed solidly, and one performed barely adequately; and, finally, one earned an A- in EN 101, one got a C+, and one failed this course. As stated in my data collection, I decided to choose former students of mine precisely because I had gotten to know them, a fact that allowed me to select such representative USMAPS students. Additionally, I chose three students whom I felt to be quite candid, based on having had more than sixty-five classes—one semester—with them, because I knew that candor was necessary for the interviews to be meaningful.

The interview questions are below, followed by the analysis of the respondents' questions. Because there are almost twice as many questions for the student interviews as for their faculty counterparts, the analysis of the responses is categorized by questions having similar themes as opposed to by individual question.

1. What was your level of performance (courses, grades, and standardized test scores) in high school English?
2. How would you characterize your high school English experience?
3. How well prepared for USMAPS English did you feel just prior to beginning that experience?
4. Did that feeling change once you began USMAPS English? If so, when and why?
5. What was your level of performance in USMAPS English?
6. How would you characterize your USMAPS English experience?
7. How well prepared did you feel for USMA English (EN 101) just prior to beginning that experience?
8. Did that feeling change once you began USMA English? If so, when and why?
9. What was your level of performance in USMA English?
10. How would you characterize your USMA English experience?
11. Was it different than you expected? If so, why?
12. Did you notice any noteworthy differences, or similarities, between USMAPS graduates as a whole and Direct Admits as a whole in EN101 with respect to their preparation for and performance in college-level English?
13. Based on your experience in USMAPS English and USMA English, what, if any, recommendations do you have regarding how the former might better prepare its students for the latter?
14. Do you have anything to add at this point?

The perceptions of these students concerning their preparation for USMAPS English—questions one through three—were fascinating. Regardless of their level of high school performance, which ranged from strong to marginal, and the quality of their high school and of their high school course load, which again ran the gamut from challenging to middling, all three respondents stated that they had felt prepared for USMAPS English. Those responses surprised me because I had simply assumed that all incoming students realized that USMAPS was a very challenging institution and offered an academic experience far different from that of most high schools. In any case, it was quite interesting that all three students possessed the confidence to feel well prepared for the next stage of their English education, despite not being admitted directly to USMA and having not performed strongly in high school in two of the three students' cases, by their own accounts. This misplaced confidence is in no way a negative reflection of these two students' characters; indeed, these students were not arrogant in any way. It is, however, perhaps reflective of the kind of confidence any young man or woman would have to possess in order to accept the challenge of attending West Point. Additionally, most students—and definitely these two students, based on my conversations with them—realize that being accepted into USMA or USMAPS is quite competitive, so crossing that threshold would understandably have reinforced their confidence in themselves.

Questions four and six deal with the students' perceptions of the USMAPS English experience. Again interestingly, these three students were unanimous in describing the feelings of inadequacy that beset them early in their time in the USMAPS English program because of the difficulty of the program. All three said that they were not used to being held accountable for doing their homework, that they were shocked by the expectations regarding their behavior and focus during the daily class meetings, and that they were "horrified" when they received their first essays back, awash in red ink. One student expressed his disbelief that "We could not text in class or talk with our friends [in

class].” Another said that “I had never written an argumentative essay before coming to USMAPS, and my teachers never marked my papers for grammar.” Yet another point that arose in all three interviews was captured in the words of one student, who proclaimed “I always thought English was easy; boy, was I wrong.”

These kinds of feelings soon changed, though, based on additional comments that these students made about their perceptions of the USMAPS English experience. “I learned more in this semester of English than I did in four years of high school English” was a response of one student, and another said that “I walked out of that class [USMAPS English] feeling like I finally knew how to really read and write.” All three students said that they did face problems managing their time with respect to juggling their classes, and one of them said that a friend of his said that “Those English teachers think theirs is the only subject we take.” However, in all, it became clear during these interviews that these students greatly valued their USMAPS English experience because they felt as if they had been challenged and guided and had made great progress as a result.

Questions seven and eight deal with students’ perceptions of their readiness for USMA English and whether that perception changed once EN 101 commenced, and the following three questions focus on their performance in EN 101 and characterization of that course. All three students noted that they felt “prepared” for their first undergraduate English course, although one student noted that he was still “anxious” because he had heard “how hard academics were down the hill [at USMA].” Another student claimed, though, that he “felt better prepared for [USMA] English than the Directs [Direct Admits]” because USMAPS English was “way harder than any high school English.” Once these students began their experience in EN 101, every one of them stated that their feelings of being prepared stayed at a high level “because USMAPS English was so much like EN 101.” One student did note, though, that he was surprised by the depth of

analysis and level of reading comprehension required by freshman English and that he wished he had worked harder at USMAPS at developing these particular skills.

The interviewed students voiced the widest discrepancies among their responses when it came time to discuss their thoughts about EN 101. One student felt that his instructor was "unfair" in grading because he, the student, did not feel that the papers were that challenging but that he never could raise his grade above a C+ despite his best efforts. Another student stated that the EN 101 experience was "easier" than expected and that it "had not been that difficult to get Bs on papers." A third student failed EN 101 but did not bear any bad feelings toward that course or USMAPS English because although he/she had worked hard to have a C going into the final, he/she "froze up" on the very important final examination and failed it. At the time of the interview, he/she was enrolled in EN 101 for the second time and was doing well, with a grade of B-.

With respect to how they perceived themselves as English students vis-à-vis their Direct Admit classmates, the interviewee responses varied widely. One commented that "the Direct Admits assume that we [Prepsters] can't help them in English," and this student also noted that "we [Prepsters] don't interact with them [Direct Admits] in class or the barracks about English." Another noted, however, that he felt "almost overprepared" for EN 101 and saw himself as a stronger reader and writer than most of his Direct Admit classmates. Additionally, with respect to what thoughts these respondents had regarding how the Prep School English program might better prepare its students for EN 101, all three students independently noted that the one thing they felt would have better prepared them for USMA English was to have had "more difficult" essay prompts that required them to "do things like intertextualize."

In all, these individual interview responses make it clear that these three students—representing much of the diversity in place among the student body at USMAPS—perceived themselves to be well prepared for EN 101, despite their widely differing backgrounds and high school experiences prior to arriving at the Prep School and their

markedly different performance in USMAPS English and in EN 101. Another noteworthy aspect of these three students is that even though all three had me as their English instructor for one semester—two in the first semester and one in the second semester—they all had different—from me and from one another—instructors for their other semester of USMAPS English. Thus, half of their USMAPS English experience took place in a different environment than that of my classroom but an environment that contributed to a remarkably similar outlook on their level of preparedness for EN 101.

The second major vehicle this study used to gauge student perceptions of their preparation for EN 101 was the focus group discussion. This focus group met during the spring of 2014 and was comprised of five former students of mine. I again made the choice to select students I knew well and who I knew would be representative of the USMAPS student body as opposed to forming a group from randomly selected Prepsters because I felt that the benefits of that representativeness would outweigh any possible benefits of random sampling. This focus group unfortunately did not include a female—none of my former female students were available at the time—but it was quite diverse in terms of ethnicity, geographic background, family status, knowledge of the military prior to entering USMAPS, performance as students in USMAPS and USMA English, and being a recruited athlete. The discussion took approximately ninety minutes, and, again, I stressed the paramount need for candor. The questions for this group discussion—essentially a group interview—are below, followed by an analysis of the group's responses.

1. How would you describe your experience in the USMAPS English program?
2. How would you characterize yourself as an English student at USMAPS?
3. What feelings do you have about the USMA English program?
4. Were there any surprises about the USMA English program?
5. What, if anything, would you change about the USMAPS English program?
6. What, if anything, would you change about the USMA English program?

7. Overall, how well do you feel that the USMAPS English program prepared you for the USMA English program?
8. Is there anything that you would like to add to our discussion at this point?

With respect to the group's perceptions of their experience in the USMAPS English program, the responses included the phrases and words "went well," "more detailed than USMA," "more student-friendly," "stressed all of the little things," and "EN 101 just expected us to know things." In terms of their feelings about the USMA English program and EN 101, individuals said that they "didn't have to work as hard at USMAPS," "the analysis was harder in EN 101," and "I felt prepared for 101 but still didn't expect it to be so hard." As did their counterparts who gave individual interviews, the individuals in this group said in response to what they would change about the USMAPS English program that "it's [USMAPS English] great, but it needs tougher essay assignments." Finally, with respect to arguably the most important topic of how well they felt prepared for EN 101, the consensus was expressed by one group member, who said "It [USMAPS English] gave us a good foundation; much better than high school."

The answers above clearly indicate that this group felt that while EN 101 was in some ways more challenging than anticipated, USMAPS English was perceived to be a course that had laid the foundation for success in EN 101. Responses to the interview and focus group discussions demonstrate that the respondents, in many ways strongly representative of their classmates, felt well prepared for EN 101. However, these responses are ultimately only those of eight students, and no matter how representative those students are, another, much more wide ranging, assessment of USMAPS students' perceptions would be quite helpful in lending credence—or disputing—those perceptions. Such a vehicle was employed in the spring of 2014.

This vehicle was a survey administered to the entire Plebe class of 2018, a group numbering just under 1100: 1097. Plebes are notoriously busy and, as a result, often provide dismally low response rates to surveys, especially surveys via email. However, in

the case of the survey developed for them as part of this study, their response rate was well over one in three as almost four hundred—three hundred seventy-nine, to be exact—Plebes responded. This number is largely attributable to assistance from former colleagues in the USMA English Department, who helped publicize this survey and encouraged their students to participate in it. Moreover, students were undoubtedly pleasantly surprised when they opened the link to the survey and saw how short it was, a reaction that almost certainly led to many of them completing it instead of closing the link and saying "I'll get to it later [never]." The questions for this survey—actually two surveys, one for Prepsters and another for Direct Admits—were developed over the course of almost a dozen hours of conversations with colleagues and trial runs. Those questions, along with the survey results, are below, followed by an analysis of the results. Table 8 presents the survey results for the Direct Admits, and Table 9 contains the responses of the USMAPS students. Of the just over nine hundred Direct Admits in the Class of 2018, two hundred ninety-one replied, almost one out of every three, while for the former Cadet Candidates, seventy-nine of the one hundred ninety-eight matriculants to USMA responded, an almost forty percent response rate. In the tables, a score of one indicates strong disagreement with the statement, while a score of 10 indicates strong agreement.

The results of these straightforward, relatively simple surveys are quite important because they represent the perceptions of an entire USMA class of EN 101 students. The previously discussed interviews and focus group dialogue are also important because of the representative nature of the students involved and the richness of their responses, but the two surveys in question provide responses that are clearly indicative of what more than one thousand EN 101 students perceived to be the case about their level of preparation for that course. Moreover, and as will be seen in the next finding, the composition and achievements of West Point classes have remained remarkably consistent over the past several decades, including the entire time span of this study, so

Table 8. Survey Responses of Direct Admits

	Thinking back to the mindset I had just prior to taking EN 101, I believed then that I was well prepared for EN 101.	After having taken EN 101 and reflecting now upon my level of preparation for EN 101, I believe that I was well prepared for EN 101.	EN 101 was a challenging course.
10	58	45	8
9	36	40	18
8	75	56	49
7	55	57	51
6	27	28	41
5	20	30	42
4	6	16	23
3	6	12	29
2	4	6	21
1	4	1	9
Average	7.6	7.2	5.8

(n = 291 of 899 possible)

Table 9. Survey Responses of USMAPS Graduates

	Thinking back to the mindset I had just prior to Prep School English, I felt well prepared for that course.	After having taken Prep School English, I believe that I was well prepared for that course.	Thinking back to the mindset I had just prior to EN 101, I felt well prepared for that course.	After having taken EN 101, I believe that I was well prepared for that course.	EN 101 was a challenging course.
10	10	12	13	14	2
9	5	12	8	12	2
8	21	19	24	15	10
7	14	7	17	16	17
6	9	8	9	11	11
5	9	7	5	7	13
4	5	3	1	3	7
3	3	6	1	0	8
2	1	3	0	0	5
1	2	2	1	1	4
Average:	6.9	7.0	7.6	7.6	5.5

(n = 79 of 198 possible)

the class in question—USMA 2018—can be confidently viewed as being representative of all of the classes in this study.

The Direct Admit survey responses reveal several important points regarding their perceptions about their level of preparation for EN 101. Prior to taking this course, these students fairly strongly—7.6 on a scale of 1 to 10—felt that they were well prepared for college-level English. However, after having taken the course in question and reflecting back upon their actual level of preparation for EN 101, these students reported that they were actually less prepared than they thought they had been, as their collective response fell from 7.6 to 7.2. This decline is not dramatic—a bit under ten percent—but it is important in that it represents the collective perception of the great majority—more than eighty percent—of an entire class of Plebes. Interestingly, even though these students collectively experienced a decrease in their confidence about the extent of their preparation for EN 101, they nonetheless did not rate EN 101 as being a particularly difficult class after having taken it: 5.8 of 10, a response that is essentially neutral with respect to their perceptions of EN 101 being a difficult course.

The USMAPS student response to this survey about "pre" and "post" perceived levels of preparation for EN 101, as well as for USMAPS English, was also quite revealing and noteworthy. The first revealing, albeit initially puzzling, aspect of the Prepsters' survey responses was that these responses indicate that they actually felt more confident about their level of preparation coming into USMAPS English once they had completed that course, despite the rigor of that program and the fact that most students earn grades significantly lower in USMAPS English than they did in high school English even though they worked much harder in USMAPS English to achieve those lower grades. The difference in the pre and post responses to this topic was only .1—an increase from 6.9 to 7.0—but the surprising point was that there was any increase at all instead of what would have been an understandable marked decrease in this response. A plausible explanation for this anomaly may very well be that students conflated their

perceptions about how much they "knew" about English before and after USMAPS English with their perceptions of how well prepared they perceived themselves to be for USMAPS English before and after they had taken the course, and their perception of greatly increased knowledge—a perception borne out in my class every semester for the past ten semesters, based on student course-end feedback—at the end of the course and the very methodical manner in which they had gained that knowledge caused them to mistakenly think "Oh, I actually knew more English than I thought I did, when I began USMAPS English."

A second, and fascinating, aspect of the USMAPS student survey responses was that the self-reported perceived level of preparation for this group of students for EN 101 was exactly the same as that of the Direct Admits—7.6—despite the fact that by the two key criteria of SAT/ACT scores and high school/USMAPS English grades, Prepsters lagged noticeably behind Direct Admits even after the former group had completed a year of USMAPS English. A conclusion about the identical response to this question that can be easily drawn is that the USMAPS English program had instilled in its students an elevated sense of confidence in their preparation for college-level English. This conclusion stems from the observation that students coming into their first post-high school English class at USMAPS reported only a 6.9 degree of confidence about their preparation, despite that class's not being a true undergraduate class, whereas the Direct Admits entering an actual undergraduate English class—at a world-renowned institution noted for its rigorous academics—rated their level of preparation at 7.6. Then, once the USMAPS students had completed their year in USMAPS English, their confidence about their perceived level of preparation for EN 101 increased to be exactly the same as that of their Direct Admit counterparts, and one could reasonably contend that the reason for this noteworthy increase was the impact of the USMAPS English program.

Yet another important aspect of the USMAPS students' survey responses was that once these students completed EN 101, their perceived level of preparation for this course

remained exactly where it had been prior to taking it: 7.6. In and of itself, this fact is important because it strongly indicates that these students felt that their degree of confidence about their preparation for this course turned out to be completely justified. Additionally, the contrast between this result of the USMAPS students' perceptions with that of the Direct Admits' perceptions is quite illuminating because not only did the latter group's perception decrease—from 7.6 to 7.2—but that group's final feelings about its level of preparation ended up being noticeably lower than the corresponding feelings of the USMAPS students: 7.2 vs. 7.6. While no certain conclusions can be drawn about this set of results, it is plausible to conclude that the USMAPS English program was the reason that its students were confident going into EN 101 and remained confident about their preparation when they reflected upon that preparation after having completed EN 101, while the Direct Admit students felt that their high school English programs had not prepared them for college English as well as they believed it had.

The final part of the data leading to Finding Two is my perceptions of USMAPS students' perceptions that they were well prepared for EN 101, based on my classroom observations. This part of the data regarding Finding Two is tangential because it clearly does not compare in importance to the students interviews I conducted or the surveys that the Class of 2018 took, but it bears mention here because, as I explained in great detail in Finding One, the fact that I could not discern any kind of difference in classroom engagement between Direct Admits and Prepsters would lend at least some weight to the conclusion that they are confident with respect to their preparation for EN 101. In other words, no group of students seemed dis-engaged or "lost" in class during any of my observations; conversely, the engagement I observed of all students led me to conclude that all of them, Prepsters included, felt adequately prepared for EN 101.

Finding Three. Finding Three was that the GPA, as measured by the final course grade, of USMAPS students in EN 101 was consistently .3 lower on a 4.0 scale, or approximately one-third of a letter grade, than the corresponding GPA of Direct Admits.

This finding is at first glance quite straightforward and perhaps not surprising, given the very different starting point of the two groups of students in question, based on their high school credentials. Of course, however, the purpose of this study was to attempt to determine the extent of the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students' performance in EN 101, so the obvious question at this point concerns the degree to which that program impacted the one-third of a letter grade deficit: did it make this differential smaller than it would have been? Did the program have a negligible effect on the deficit, or did it even counterintuitively make it worse than it would have been without its impact on its students? These and other questions were at the heart of this study, and this finding has many layers that need to be peeled back in order to offer any kind of plausible responses to them and analysis of the finding itself.

To make meaning of this finding, many factors bear examination. In the upcoming several paragraphs, that examination will occur, and it will be based on a study of many factors that provide relevant, important context to the .3 point GPA differential between Direct Admits and USMAPS students. These factors all involve a comparison of the two groups' performance at USMA, and that performance is comprised of respective USMA graduation rates, CEER scores, USMAPS admissions to USMA,GPAs at graduation, EN 101 scores per SAT verbal score quintile, and USMAPS English grades. These factors, when examined for their possible relationship to EN 101 performance, offer the potential for a wealth of understanding regarding that performance. Additionally, these factors impact other, upcoming findings, so discussing these factors now also lays the groundwork for analyzing findings beyond Finding Three.

This examination of the factors above will begin at the end, so to speak: graduation from USMA, the goal of every USMAPS student and Direct Admit. Between the years 1999 and 2014, inclusive, USMAPS students consistently graduated at a lower rate from USMA than did Direct Admits. While four of those years had graduation differences of less than two percentage points, ten of the other years had differences of more than seven

percent, and in only one of these fifteen years was the USMA graduation rate higher for Prepsters than for Direct Admits. The average graduation rate for Direct Admits was remarkably stable from year to year, hovering almost always within a percentage point or two of 80%, but the average graduate rate for USMAPS students varied considerably from year to year, ranging from a high of over 82% to a low of less than 68%, including a year-to-year range for Prepsters that was quite erratic. The reasons for this kind of difference with respect to overall graduation rates as well as the stability within each group's graduation rates are beyond the purview of this study, but they are relevant with respect to Finding Three because they reflect on the largest scale possible what one would expect of USMAPS students: they are going to face more difficulties at USMA than are Direct Admits, for a whole gamut of reasons, but the academic shortcomings of Prepsters certainly play a key role in their lower USMA graduation rates, and those shortcomings are also reflected in EN 101 GPAs. The figures below are the graduation rates from USMA for Direct Admits (DA) and USMAPS students, by USMA class and rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 10. Graduation Rates from the United States Military Academy for Direct Admits (DA) and USMAPS Students

	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11'	'12	'13	'14
DA	81	83	80	80	80	82	80	75	77	81	79	80	83	80	82	83
USMAPS	80	75	73	74	70	70	74	64	76	82	79	78	80	73	76	68

(n = app. 14,000; source = OEMA)

The beginning of every West Pointer's graduation from USMA starts with that person's admission to USMA. The CEER score is the most important criterion in a West Point candidate's admissions file, and it is comprised of a combination of the candidate's SAT or ACT verbal scores, SAT or ACT math score, and high school class rank. For a whole host of complicated reasons, there is a very strong correlation between CEER

score and success at West Point, and, unsurprisingly, USMAPS students have lower CEER scores than those of Direct Admits because Direct Admits, generally speaking, have stronger high school transcripts. Additionally, the fact that the greatest weight in the composite of scores that form the CEER score is given to SAT—or ACT equivalent—scores also makes it clear why Direct Admit CEER scores are higher than those of USMAPS students, given that students have to be academically disqualified to attend USMAPS. Following is a comparison of CEER scores, grouped by USMA class for Direct Admits and Prepsters.

Table 11. CEER Scores for Direct Admits and Prepsters

	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11'	'12	'13	'14
DA	611	617	610	609	613	608	608	613	612	614	617	613	613	611	609	621
USMAPS	577	554	551	547	531	536	532	539	545	552	536	538	532	538	521	513

(n = app. 14,000; source = OEMA)

As is evident, USMAPS students have lower CEER scores every year than do their Direct Admit counterparts, and that difference ranges from a low of 34 to a high of 88, with an average year-to-year difference of approximately sixty to seventy points. Given this kind of differential upon entering USMA, it unsurprising that Direct Admits on average outperform their USMAPS counterparts at USMA, including their EN 101 GPAs.

Once a candidate has been deemed to be disqualified from entering USMA directly but has been offered admission to USMAPS, those candidates who accept that offer of admission form the entering Prep School class. As stated earlier in this dissertation, the model at USMAPS has changed from one of attrition to one of development, and that change is reflected in the statistics regarding how many Cadet Candidates complete the program at USMAPS. Before that change in philosophy, roughly only fifty percent of the students who entered USMAPS would complete its program, while in the past two decades, approximately eighty percent of entering students have completed the USMAPS

program, a number which includes those Cadet Candidates who are not separated but decide to leave of their own accord (Stibravy).

On a related note, despite the high level of its curriculum, USMAPS is not an accredited school, and students do not receive transfer credit courses for work done at USMAPS, should they decide to leave USMAPS early or not accept their offer of admission to USMA, if they receive one. Additionally, USMAPS, in conjunction with the Naval Academy and Air Force Academy preparatory schools, does not have formal graduation requirements because the entire intent of these institutions is to prepare students to move on to their parent schools, not to "graduate" them. Moreover, some students who do not fare well at USMAPS are nonetheless granted admission to USMA, for a variety of reasons, and the strict criterion of "graduate" or "non-graduate" would be cumbersome and inflexible with respect to these and other students' USMA admissions cases.

The most important aspect of the information below is that it clearly indicates that USMAPS students are highly motivated to enter West Point because the vast majority of those who receive offers of admission to USMA accept those offers. This information thus provides helpful context with respect to being able to carefully consider the kind of strong desire those USMAPS students sitting in EN 101 classrooms possess to be in those classrooms. The first row indicates those students who received an offer of admission to USMA, and the second row shows how many students actually entered West Point on R-Day.

Table 12. Comparison of Admitted and Matriculated Students from 1999 to 2014

	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11'	'12	'13	'14
Offered	156	160	170	189	190	193	180	169	183	186	186	208	199	192	202	204
Matriculated	147	155	166	184	183	189	171	167	181	180	185	196	192	189	198	197

(source = OEMA)

As was noted during the discussion of the first part of the analysis of this third finding, USMAPS students graduate at consistently lower rates than do Direct Admits. The subsequent two points began the process of examining relevant comparisons between these groups of students at the beginning of their West Point journey—comparative CEER scores and the very high rates at which USMAPS students accept offers of admission to USMA—and that examination continues with another relevant point, the respective four-year GPAs of USMAPS students and Direct Admits. Unsurprisingly, given the material that has been analyzed, the GPAs of Prepsters at the time of graduation from USMA are consistently lower than those of Direct Admits. On average, that differential is remarkably consistent and is approximately .4 to .5 on a 4.0 scale, or approximately one-half of a letter grade. Possible reasons for this differential have already been discussed and analyzed in the context of this third finding, but an intriguing aspect of the overall GPA differential of these two groups is that this differential—one that accounts for all courses taken at West Point over the course of four years, including the extensive math, science, and engineering courses that all Cadets must take—is noticeably larger than the differential contained in the third finding: the approximate .3 differential in the EN 101 course grades of both groups. The gap between the differentials—.2—may not seem like much, but in fact the EN 101 differential is only sixty percent as large as the overall academic differential. Reasons for that difference lie beyond the scope of this study, but it seems reasonable to believe that the close connection between USMAPS English and USMA freshman English, particularly EN 101, with respect to rigor and subject matter serves to minimize the difference between the GPAs of Direct Admits and USMAPS students in EN 101. To explore more closely the reasons for why the differential between USMAPS English and EN101 GPAs is smaller than the differential between graduation GPAs (for Direct Admits and Prepsters), I plan to investigate underlying reasons for student performance—reasons such as family income, socioeconomic status, and race, via Critical Race Theory—much more closely in

a subsequent study than I did for this study in order to determine whether these underlying reasons might shed light on this topic. The information below provides the exact GPAs of USMAPS students and Direct Admits (DA) at graduation, with the GPAs rounded to the nearest tenth.

Table 13. GPAs of Graduating Students by Year

	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11'	'12	'13	'14
DA	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.2
USMAPS	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.6

(n = app. 13,000; source = OEMA)

As will be seen in detail during the analysis of Finding Four, USMAPS students enter USMA with consistently lower SAT scores—verbal and quantitative—and their ACT equivalents than do Direct Admits, and that fact underlies the fourth finding of this study. With respect to the context that is currently being established for the .3 lower GPAs in EN 101 that is this study's third finding, a specific aspect of those SAT scores is quite revealing. Standardized tests in general, and the SAT in particular, are polarizing entities within many communities in America, and they certainly have generated much controversy within the education community. Some educators believe they are very poor predictors of success in the college classroom because of factors such as family income, socioeconomic status, and race, while others believe that they quite accurately predict student performance, especially when rigor of institution and major are factored into the analysis.

Regardless of those widely varying claims about the efficacy of the SAT, analysis of EN 101 GPAs with respect to SAT verbal score reveals a very strong correlation between SAT score quintile and corresponding EN 101 GPA. Indeed, that correlation is so strong as to be essentially linear: each quintile of SAT verbal scores has a corresponding EN 101 GPA, and as the quintile rises—or declines—the corresponding

EN 101 GPA rises—or declines. Furthermore, that decline or rise is markedly similar from quintile to quintile: when moving from the second to the third quintile, and then from the third to the fourth, and, finally, from the fourth to the fifth, the corresponding GPA differential is never more than two-hundredths of a point. The information in Table 9 specifies these differences and relationships, and this information is the compilation of average EN 101 GPAs and SAT verbal scores for twenty classes of USMA cadets—1999-2018—a very large sample size of more than twenty thousand students and their GPAs and standardized scores.

Table 14. EN 101 GPAs by SAT Quintile for the 1999-2018 Classes

SAT Quintile	1	2	3	4	5
EN 101 GPA	2.32	2.53	2.67	2.83	2.99

(n = app. 21,000; source = OEMA)

The reasons for this differential are almost certainly many and complex. For example, this kind of relationship may very well exist between family income and EN 101 GPA, but within the parameters of this study, what matters most is that these data strongly indicate that SAT verbal scores are accurate predictors of performance in EN 101, regardless of the underlying reason(s) for the relationship between SAT scores and EN 101 course grades. Thus, for example, if focused instruction at USMAPS could help its students appreciably raise their SAT verbal scores, there are strong reasons to believe that their corresponding performance in EN 101 would improve, regardless of their family income or any other factors. These data are not grouped by USMAPS students or Direct Admits, but the key point is the strong correlation between SAT verbal scores and EN 101 GPAs for more than twenty thousand students spread across twenty West Point classes, 1999-2018. With respect to the third finding of this research project, this aspect of that finding is quite important because one would certainly expect USMAPS students

to have lower EN 101 GPAs than those of Direct Admits, given the strong correlation between SAT verbal scores and EN 101 GPAs, on the one hand, and the fact that Prepsters have consistently lower SAT verbal scores than do Direct Admits, on the other.

The last aspect of this finding that will be analyzed before the cornerstone of this finding—the EN 101 GPAs of USMAPS students and Direct Admits—is directly examined is a look back at a key component of Cadet Candidates' experience that is also directly relevant to the third finding, their performance in USMAPS English itself. That performance is important because it manifests itself in the same discipline as EN 101—English—and in the final English course Cadet Candidates take before commencing their English studies at USMA in EN 101. Their performance in USMAPS English indicates how well they are performing in a course designed to be a stepping stone to EN 101 and to mirror that course in content and rigor, and a comparison of the GPAs the same students achieve in each of these courses indicates that the these two goals of USMAPS English—content closely related to that of EN 101 and, especially, rigor—do in fact exist in USMAPS English.

The data below are sorted by USMA graduating class but were not available for classes prior to 2007; however, the data still address twelve classes of USMAPS students comprised of more than twenty-five hundred young men and women, so the picture resulting from these data is nonetheless clear in focus and broad in scope. The numbers below the class years provide the overall average in USMAPS English for that year, with the relevant corresponding letter grade scale being 77-79 for a C+ and 80-83 for a B-.

Table 15. USMAPS English Averages by Class

USMA Class	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18
	76.8	74.6	77.0	78.9	78.9	81.4	80.5	81.5	83.1	81.5	83.3	82.2

(n= app. 2300; sources = OEMA and OIR)

These data indicate that USMAPS English students certainly are not receiving great numbers of A's and B's and that the course average has hovered for more than the past decade in the C+/B- range, a range quite consistent with EN 101 GPAs. Additionally, almost every USMAPS student reports in his or her course-end feedback via narrative responses that he or she had to work far harder in USMAPS English than in high school English in order to earn grades noticeably lower than those received in high school English.

The most important aspect of this study's third finding is, of course, the actual GPAs earned by Direct Admits and USMAPS students in EN 101. As stated at the beginning of the analysis of Finding Three, that difference has consistently been approximately .3, or one-third of a letter grade, based on a 4.0 scale. Table 16 below presents the EN 101 GPAs for the past sixteen years of USMAPS students and their Direct Admit counterparts; those GPAs have been rounded to the nearest hundredth of a point.

Table 16. EN 101 GPAs for Direct Admit and USMAPS Students from 1999 to 2014

	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11'	'12	'13	'14
DA	2.41	2.42	2.56	2.47	2.54	2.61	2.56	2.62	2.60	2.79	2.80	2.86	2.79	2.74	2.93	2.72
USMAPS	2.24	2.19	2.30	2.19	2.13	2.17	2.28	2.40	2.38	2.56	2.55	2.63	2.52	2.41	2.41	2.60

(n = app. 14,000; source = OEMA)

Before the data in the table above are analyzed, an additional factor that was examined as part of this research project and that bears discussion now was the number of course failures in EN 101 for Direct Admits and USMAPS students. At USMA, every student must pass every course in order to graduate, so course failure is obviously a very important topic at that institution. However, the numbers of EN 101 course failures were quite low for both groups, despite the rigorous nature of the course, and were thus not nearly as indicative of performance in the course as GPAs based upon thousands of

students' records. Prepsters did fail EN 101 at a higher rate than did Direct Admits, but, again, the numbers involved were so small—on average, fewer than four Direct Admits and three USMAPS students per year—that even though that failure rate was certainly disproportionately higher for the latter category of students, the total number of students in this category is miniscule in comparison to the number of students who took EN 101 and thus are not nearly as relevant with respect to performance in the course as are final course grades.

The data above demonstrate that USMAPS students earned lower GPAs in EN 101 than those of Direct Admits, and this relationship existed for every year of this study. Additionally, the data above show that that difference was normally in the .25 to .35 range, with a low differential of .17 and a high of .52. However, the answer to the resultant question of "Why do USMAPS students earn lower GPAs in EN 101 every year of the study than do Direct Admits?" is not so clear. Having said that, though, the six factors that were examined as the context for these EN 101 GPA differentials shed considerable light on plausible answers to that question. Ultimately, USMAPS students have lower CEER scores, lower SAT verbal scores, lower GPAs upon graduation, and lower graduation rates than do their Direct Admit counterparts. Hence, it is to be expected that their EN 101 GPAs would be lower as well. However, a quite illuminating discovery of this analysis is that the differential in EN 101 GPAs is actually lower than one would expect, given the particulars of all of the key factors mentioned above and as explained throughout this analysis of Finding Three. Ultimately, the comparatively low differential between Direct Admit and Prepster EN 101 GPAs takes on a different light when examined with respect to comparable CEER score, SAT verbal, graduation GPAs, and graduation rate differentials, with all of these factors pointing to an expected higher EN 101 differential than this study found—quite plausibly because of the close connection in content and rigor of EN 101 and USMAPS English.

Finding Four. Finding Four was that those Direct Admits who were, broadly speaking, just above the threshold for being admitted to USMA had a slightly higher GPA in EN 101 than that of those USMAPS students who were, broadly speaking, just below the threshold for direct admission to USMA. This finding was initially quite surprising because even though the data demonstrate that the EN 101 GPAs of these USMAPS students were only a very small degree lower than those of the comparable Direct Admit students—an average of approximately .03 lower for all twenty years of the study, a time period including six years in which USMAPS GPAs were actually higher than Direct Admit GPAs, and an average of approximately .10 lower for those fourteen years when the Prepster GPAs were lower than those of the Direct Admits—the fact that in fourteen of these twenty years the graduates of USMAPS still lagged by any degree behind Direct Admit students with comparable SAT verbal scores was perplexing because the key difference between these two groups for the purposes of this study was that USMAPS students had had the benefit of the one-year intervention of the USMAPS English program, whereas the Direct Admits had not. After much analysis, though, this finding ended up having much different implications than initially thought, as the upcoming paragraphs will show.

The genesis of this part of this research project was a study discussed in this dissertation's literature review. At the time I came across this study, I had been wondering how to attempt to isolate the variable of the USMAPS English program with respect to its impact on USMAPS students' performance in EN 101. This study, Michael Kuerlander and Jessica Howell's "College Remediation: A Review of the Causes and Consequences," highlights the efforts of three groups of researchers to isolate the variable of remediation's impact upon those students who undergo it, and its most important effect on my research project was that it gave me the idea to attempt a similar approach as part of my research. After a good deal of thought and discussion with a number of colleagues, I decided to ask OEMA to compare the EN 101 GPAs of Direct Admits who were

essentially in the "just above" category with those of USMAPS students who were in the "just below" category. Because the subject in question was performance in EN 101, SAT verbal scores appeared to be the best criterion to use to compare the two groups, especially given the very strong correlation between SAT scores and GPA in EN 101 discussed at length in the analysis of Finding Three; as will soon be seen, though, that decision was not an optimal one, in some ways, but it turned out to be a very revealing one.

The surprising aspect of this finding was what seemed to be the counterintuitive result that a comparison of what appeared to be similar Direct Admits and USMAPS students—essentially those Direct Admits with the bottom quartile of SAT verbal scores as compared with those Prepsters with SAT verbal scores in the middle tercile of USMAPS students—revealed that this group of Direct Admits still had slightly higher scores than the comparable Prepsters, even though the Prepsters had undergone an intensive, year-long program of essentially freshman-level English that the Direct Admits had not experienced. After more thought and exploration, including invaluable feedback from my Advanced Seminar professors, about why this seemingly perplexing finding occurred, several very interesting aspects of this finding were revealed. Ultimately, further analysis of the backgrounds of these two groups of students suggested that even though they were similar with respect to SAT verbal scores—in some ways a seemingly very strong predictor of performance of EN 101 performance—they were markedly different in several other key areas, most of which are captured in two short but very important acronyms: the already discussed CEER and the soon to be discussed WCS, or Whole Candidate Score.

As addressed in Finding Three, the CEER score is a compilation of a candidate's qualifications for admission to West Point with respect to his or her standardized test scores and high school class rank. In the context of Finding Four, of course, the SAT verbal component of the CEER score has already been accounted for by its use as the

basis for establishing the two groups of compared students. What was quite surprising, though, was to learn that the CEER scores of these two "similar" groups differed markedly: on a scale in which the average entrant to USMA has a CEER score in the low 600s, the difference between the "just above" Direct Admits and "just below" USMAPS students was approximately 40 points, a sizeable margin—especially given the quite similar SAT verbal scores of both groups—and one that, upon further analysis, appears to go a long way toward explaining why these two groups did not perform as expected in EN 101 with respect to each other.

The other major components in the CEER score, aside from SAT verbal scores, are SAT math scores and high school class rank, which is normally strongly correlated with high school GPA and also high school curriculum. These components were discussed in detail in Finding Three as part of the context for that finding, but it is important to note here that the Direct Admit comparison group is clearly stronger in these other two components than the USMAPS comparison group because SAT verbal scores were essentially equalized as the basis for the comparison, so the difference in the CEER scores must stem from these two other criteria. Moreover, although any kind of a detailed analysis of the impact of these two other factors on school performance is well beyond the scope of this study, research demonstrating the importance of high school curriculum and student performance in that curriculum—such as that in Walter Berry's "Bridging the Gap: A Community College and Area High Schools Collaborate" and William Tobin's *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education*, both of which are discussed in this study's literature review—as a predictor for success in college is so widespread as to be essentially common knowledge among educators, and it is this difference in high school performance that quite plausibly accounts for what I felt to be the surprising respective performance of just above Direct Admits and just below USMAPS students in EN 101.

While a candidate's CEER score has been shown for decades to be strongly correlated with that person's performance at USMA, another, even more comprehensive

admissions factor is the Whole Candidate Score, or WCS. This score includes the CEER components but also incorporates three other components of a candidate's admissions file—physical fitness, leadership potential, and extracurricular activities—all of which are strong indicators of students who are likely to outperform otherwise comparable students who do not possess these attributes to the same degree. While I did not examine WCSs for this study because of the strong correlation I had learned of between CEER scores and performance at USMA, future studies would do well to address this element because it is even more comprehensive than the CEER score. Additionally, and unsurprisingly, Cadet Candidates have lower WCSs than those of Direct Admits, with implications that are almost certainly quite important for performance at West Point. Specifically, as described in detail in Chapter Two, West Point is a very physically demanding place, and students who are in better physical shape are better able to handle other pressures attendant with the West Point experience. With respect to leadership potential, those students who have demonstrated upon admission to West Point stronger leadership in high school than their West Point classmates did in high school are also clearly likely to be more motivated and more engaged, traits that carry over with strong effect in the classroom. Moreover, involvement in extracurricular activities is also an indicator of not only a student's engagement in school life but also of that student's ability to handle multiple competing demands on his or her time, an essential skill for success in college, especially a college like West Point.

Finally, and with respect to what is highly probably a factor of great importance in comparing these groups, even though this factor is not accounted for in the CEER scores, USMAPS students are more than twice as likely to be varsity athletes than are Direct Admits (OEMA). West Point competes at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics, Division One, and stressors on athletes at this level of competition are tremendous. In addition to having to overcome all of the obstacles inherent in being a cadet, student-athletes at West Point must also deal with daily strenuous in-season practices—wrestlers

and swimmers practice twice daily, a mind-boggling feat given cadets' daily schedules—travelling to games that necessitates frequent missed classes, and the stress of competing for a position on a daily basis, along with the culmination of all of the previous elements: game-day competition. Thus, for the two groups involved in this finding, another key reason why the USMAPS group performed seemingly unaccountably lower than did the Direct Admit group is likely the much heavier involvement in intercollegiate athletics of the former group than that of the latter.

With the preceding paragraphs on this topic serving as background and a partial explanation of the seemingly counterintuitive fourth finding of this study, a close examination of the data themselves leads to further reflection on this finding. Table 12 below contains the specific EN 101 GPAs for the "just above" Direct Admits and "just below" USMAPS students. These data are based on the bottom quarter of SAT verbal scores of Direct Admits, a range running largely from 540 to 590, along with the middle tercile of SAT verbal scores for USMAPS students, a spectrum going from 530 to 580. These SAT verbal scores are the average of twenty classes of cadets, from 1999-2018. Additionally, with respect to the aforementioned CEER scores of these two groups, the twenty-year average for the "just above" Direct Admits was 577, while the average for the "just below" USMAPS students was 533, a forty-four point differential.

Table 17. EN 101 GPAs for "Just Above" Direct Admits and "Just Below" USMAPS Students from the 1999 to 2018 Classes

	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08
DA	2.29	2.15	2.37	2.31	2.29	2.37	2.32	2.41	2.35	2.46
Prep	2.23	2.22	2.21	2.21	.237	2.18	2.32	2.42	2.34	2.56`

	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14'	15	'16	'17	'18
DA	2.48	2.58	2.51	2.50	2.70	2.43	2.54	2.48	2.54	2.50
Prep	2.53	2.54	2.47	2.43	2.68	2.28	2.44	2.36	2.59	2.46

(n = app. 22,000; source = OEMA)

In terms of providing granularity to this finding, the information above allows one to see that the year-to-year average differential is approximately only .03, once the six years in which the Prep GPAs are higher and the one year in which the two groups have exactly the same GPAs are accounted for. Additionally, the difference in the years, fourteen of twenty, in which the DA score is higher is approximately .10. Admittedly, these differentials are minimal, but, again, the key point here is that the DA scores are any higher than those of the USMAPS students, given the year-long intervention of the USMAPS English experience. However, as was discussed in previous paragraphs, there are several other factors that are almost certainly in play with this finding, and those factors are probably accounted for in the crucially important CEER scores. Once the "hidden," or non-observable, factors of SAT math scores but especially high school class rank are accounted for, the differential in EN 101 GPAs between these two groups is not surprising at all.

Indeed, one could reasonably infer that the USMAPS English program has likely helped to close the gap between these two groups of students—even though they are quite similar in one strong predictor of EN 101 GPAs, SAT verbal scores—because the differential in CEER scores between these groups is a noteworthy forty-three points on a roughly six hundred point scale, while the EN 101 GPA differential is only a miniscule .03, once the results of all years of the study are considered, and the differential is still only approximately .10, even when only those fourteen years are considered when the Prepster GPAs are lower than those of the Direct Admits. In essence, the profile of an average "just above" Direct Admit is marked by an average verbal SAT score in the mid to upper 500s but a CEER score of 577, while the profile of an average "just below" USMAPS student shares a quite similar average SAT verbal score but diverges with a much lower average CEER score of 533, with all of the aforementioned implications of that CEER score differential. Thus, given this large divergence in CEER scores and the very small divergence in EN 101 GPAs, a difference that would be expected to be larger,

based on the comparable CEER scores of the two groups, one might plausibly conclude that the USMAPS English program intervention is helping to close that gap beyond what one would expect.

In subsequent studies, a clearly fertile field to examine would be a comparison of Direct Admits and USMAPS students with similar CEER scores, not only similar SAT verbal scores, because of what this study has found in its analysis of its fourth finding. These subsequent studies would almost certainly be able to better isolate the variable of the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students' performance in EN101 because these Direct Admits would not only have similar SAT verbal scores but also would have similar high school class ranks, thereby accounting for the extremely important variable of high school classroom performance. Another area ripe for research will be to examine in much more detail than did this study the particulars of not only the different criteria of the CEER scores but also factors such as how the "just above" and "just below" groups compare with respect to the factors addressed in the WCSs but not the CEER scores: physical fitness, leadership potential, and extracurricular activities. These factors can have wide-ranging, important impacts on student performance and should thus be addressed in future studies. A final area of potentially productive research would be to address candidates' socioeconomic status, family education levels, quality of high school, and many other related criteria. A study that includes such additional considerations would almost certainly be more telling with respect to the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students' performance in EN 101 than the comparison done for this research project—or even comparisons based only on CEER scores or WCSs—because such a study could analyze students through the widest possible lens and hopefully control for almost every possible variable aside from the USMAPS English program. Ultimately, though, all three kinds of subsequent studies—ones based on CEER scores, WCSs, or a wide variety of socioeconomic factors—hold great promise for attempting to isolate the variable in question: the USMAPS English program.

Finding Five. This study's fifth finding was that those students who had studied under the revised curriculum in effect for Academic Years (AY) 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 had a .17 higher GPA in EN 101 than did those students who had studied under the curriculum in effect for AY 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. This finding is based on a total of four years of data and examined the last two classes of USMAPS students who had studied under the "old" English curriculum and the first two classes of USMAPS students who had studied under the "new" curriculum. To obtain these data, OEMA simply averaged the EN 101 GPAs of the two years of USMAPS students for the two "pre" classes and then took the same steps for the two "post" classes.

A critically important part of this finding is that the two other variables that might have strongly impacted these students' GPAs in EN 101—the overall strength of these four USMAPS classes as measured by CEER scores and the rigor of EN 101 itself—were accounted for, in addition to simply looking at the EN 101 GPAs of the students in question. This accounting was quite important because if the strength of the two sets of classes had been markedly different—specifically, if the two "post" classes had been stronger than the two "pre" classes, as indicated by CEER scores—that fact alone could have conceivably caused the increased EN 101 GPA, not the revised curriculum. As it turned out, the average CEER score—and the analysis of Finding Five demonstrated the great importance of this measure—of the two classes that studied under the old curriculum was 544, while the average CEER score of the two classes that studied under the new curriculum was 534. This fact is quite noteworthy because, based on what the analysis of Finding Five revealed about the importance of CEER scores with respect to academic performance at USMA, one would have reasonably expected the classes with the higher CEER scores, the "pre" classes, to have had correspondingly higher GPAs in EN 101, but that expectation did not manifest itself in this case because it was actually the two "post" classes, the ones with the lower CEER average, that had the higher EN 101 GPA.

With respect to the composition and rigor of EN 101, the other key variable in this finding, detailed conversations with the Course Directors of that course for the four years in question revealed that the nature of the course itself changed very little during the years in question for this finding. The course requirements were essentially the same across these four years, as was the overall difficulty of the readings and the writing assignments. Interestingly, though, and very importantly for this finding, the GPA for EN 101 as a whole actually decreased for the years studied for Finding Five, from 2.69 during the two "pre" years to 2.67 during the two "post" years. This decrease of .02 is quite small, but the fact that the overall course GPA decreased at all during the same time period that the GPA of USMAPS students increased by .17 is noteworthy because one could reasonably expect the average GPA of Prepsters to decline during this time period when the overall GPA declined, but that decline did not occur.

This analysis of the overall strength of the "pre" and "post" classes as well as of the nature and rigor of EN 101 and the overall GPA of EN 101 during the time in question strongly suggests that the revised curriculum played at least a large role, and perhaps the only role, in increasing the performance of USMAPS students in EN 101, as measured by course GPA, during the years studied. Based on the data, one would have expected the two "post" classes, had they not studied under a revised curriculum, to have a somewhat lower GPA than the two "pre" classes, but that expectation did not manifest itself. Instead, two classes that were somewhat weaker than the two control classes and that took EN 101 during a time when the average GPA declined compared to the two control classes ended up with a GPA that was .17 higher than that of the two control classes, the "pre" classes. This increase is not large, but it is meaningful in the context of all of the relevant data. This finding is based on an instance in this research project when one of the factors under study—the impact of a revised USMAPS English curriculum on its students' GPA in EN 101—could be isolated relatively well, and the result speaks strongly to the positive impact of that revised curriculum.

Chapter 2—"Context"—of this dissertation contains a detailed, eight page description of the changes instituted that resulted in the revised curriculum and an analysis of the reasons for those changes, but the key aspects of that discussion bear repeating at this point, in light of Finding Five. A close examination of the "old" curriculum found that while it had many strengths, it did not require students to read enough or write enough argumentative essays. Furthermore, it did not mandate that students study grammar in a focused, recursive manner, nor did it have them do their writing in a methodical, closely supervised way. Additionally, the extant curriculum did not have any kind of pre- and post-testing, especially for the single most important skill to develop, based upon an analysis of student performance in EN 101 and the outsized importance of the final examination in that course: the ability to write an argumentative essay under the pressure of time, without assistance from anyone, and based on a sophisticated text or series of texts. As detailed in Chapter IV, the revised curriculum addressed every one of these concerns, and the results of that revision seem to indicate that the new curriculum positively impacted those students who studied it.

As will be discussed further during the conclusions and recommendations chapter, this fifth finding is arguably one of the three most important findings of this study. As such, the details of this finding warrant close scrutiny, as do the details of the differences between the old and new curricula. These differences manifested themselves in a greatly increased emphasis upon critical reading, with respect to the duration of the course that students read—the entire course, with the new curriculum—and the level of difficulty and type of those readings—more difficult and with an increased emphasis on non-fiction argumentative essays; a greatly increased emphasis on argumentative writing, both in and out of class; the institution of grammar instruction that narrowed in breadth but increased in depth by focusing only on very commonly used aspects of grammar and that was recursive in the sense of assessing students throughout the year on concepts they had learned largely in the first quarter; and by the inclusion of a robust battery of pre- and

post-assessments in the areas of grammar, critical reading, and argumentative writing. Ultimately, and in light of the analysis of the impact of the revised curriculum upon the performance in EN 101 of the students whose studies of English were guided by it for an entire academic year, it appears reasonable to conclude that this curriculum was at least partly responsible for a noteworthy increase in those students' performance in EN 101.

Having made that claim, I am certainly cognizant, as I discussed in detail in the Researcher's Role section, that I must be very cautious about claims that cast a positive light on the USMAPS English program because of my vested interest in that program's success and appearance of success. It is certainly possible that the apparent positive influence of the revised USMAPS English curriculum on its students' performance in EN 101 was caused by a variety of factors having nothing to do with that curriculum, and further research is certainly indicated on this very important part of this research project. However, for all of the reasons stated in the analysis of the data that led to Finding Five, I do believe that that revised curriculum had a positive impact on its students' performance in EN 101.

Finding Six. Finding Six was that there exists a close correspondence between the perceptions of USMA English faculty and USMAPS students about these students' preparation for EN 101 and the actual performance of these students in EN 101. In other words, this finding was that there exists a close connection between reality and perception regarding perceptions of Prepster preparation for EN 101 and those same students' performance in that course. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, the original focus of this study was solely on the perceptions of USMA English faculty and USMAPS students regarding the student's preparation for USMA English, specifically EN 101 because it is the USMA English course most closely connected to USMAPS English, in content and chronological proximity. The reason for this focus solely on perceptions was that program assessments based on data aside from perceptions are notoriously difficult to perform because of the great difficulties in isolating the variable in question, normally

the effectiveness of the program in question. Perceptions, meanwhile, are essentially self-reported, most frequently via interviews and surveys, although observations of behavior can also lead to reasonable conclusions of the perceptions of those engaged in the observed behavior. As such, studying perceptions is often times much more straightforward than reports involving data other than perceptions because the researcher is simply reporting the perceptions and then analyzing only those perceptions. The analysis of these perceptions is certainly not straightforward, but, again, the strength of studies focusing only on perceptions is that they can much more easily isolate the variable in question because that variable is essentially one thing: the perceptions themselves. Thus, focusing solely on perceptions is often considered a more credible route to take for qualitative studies, as evidenced in the advice I received early in my doctoral studies from two professors in different departments.

The major concern regarding using only perceptions for a study such as this one—a study focused on program assessment—though, is that those perceptions could, and certainly have been countless times in human existence, be a very far cry from reality, as John Dewey explores in *How We Think*. If, for examples, students perceive, even very strongly, that a course is benefitting them greatly and preparing them well for an upcoming course or assessment, but those students' performance in that course or on that assessment is very poor year after year and time after time, the connection between those perceptions and reality is certainly open to question and probably warrants close scrutiny. That is not to say that the perceptions in question are necessarily of no merit. If the students in question truly do have those perceptions, it is clearly worth examining why they hold them, particularly in light of their poor performance on whatever it is that the course or program in question is supposed to be preparing them for. It is also possible that, in many ways, the program really is preparing them well, or as well as is possible, and factors besides the program itself and well beyond the purview of the program—for example, problems at home or with friends—are causing the problematic performance.

However, that kind of examination might very well never arise if the question of effectiveness were not examined beyond what students reported their perceptions of that program's effectiveness to be. If, in other words, those students' perceptions regarding effectiveness were combined with data reporting their level of performance in the course or program being evaluated, interested parties—researchers, administrators, teachers, and, most importantly, the students themselves—would then at least be cognizant of the apparent disconnect and could make an informed decision of whether to examine the program in question.

In the case of this study, the latter option was followed, with what seem to be fascinating results, many of which have been discussed. With respect to Finding Six, and based on the analysis of Finding One, USMAPS English faculty clearly perceived USMAPS students to be well prepared for EN 101 and on par with their Direct Admit counterparts. These perceptions came via more than seven hours of in-depth interviews of six of these faculty members as well as a robust response rate to a department-wide survey, in addition to four hours of observations of these instructors while they were teaching, and as such can be deemed to be reliable in nature. Moreover, and based on the analysis conducted of Finding Two, USMAPS students themselves also clearly perceived themselves to be well prepared for EN 101 on par with their Direct Admit counterparts, based on Prepsters' responses during interviews and a focus group discussion, as well as their responses to a survey taken by the entire USMA Class of 2018 and their actions during several hours of observed EN 101 classroom instruction.

Because of the preceding discussion that highlights instructors' and students' clear perceptions that USMAPS students were well prepared for EN 101, the next logical step is to compare those perceptions with these students' performance in EN 101. As evidenced by the exhaustive analysis of the data regarding this performance, analysis found in earlier sections of the current chapter, it is evident that USMAPS students ultimately performed well in EN 101. However, when one considers the starting point of

Cadet Candidates on their first day at USMAPS, one can easily ascertain that USMAPS students begin the challenge of becoming prepared for success in EN 101 well behind their Direct Admit counterparts. By almost any measure that can be made—such as standardized test scores, high school grades, high school class rank, quality of high school, leadership potential, and extracurricular activities—Cadet Candidates begin the journey to that first day in EN 101 quite far off the pace of their Direct Admit classmates. Fortunately, though, and much to their credit, USMAPS students persevere and begin class well prepared for EN 101, based on their own and their instructors' perceptions. Then, through more hard work, grit, and intellectual growth, these students achieve their goal—success in EN 101—at a rate somewhat below that of their Direct Admit counterparts but admirable nevertheless. Specifically, USMAPS students achieve a GPA in EN 101, a rigorous course in the midst of a rigorous Plebe year, on average approximately one-third of a letter within the performance of Direct Admit students. Year in and year out, over the last twenty years, almost four thousand USMAPS students have earned an average EN 101 grade in the high C+/low B- range, a significant accomplishment in the context of the West Point experience and one that compares favorably with the Direct Admit EN 101 GPA range of B/B-. Thus, because the perceptions of EN 101 faculty and EN 101 USMAPS students were that USMAPS students were well prepared for EN 101, and because those students performed well in EN 101 as measured by final course grades, Finding Six ensues: in this case, perceptions closely matched reality, as measured by course grades.

Finding Seven. This chapter is now ready to present its analysis of this study's final finding, Finding Seven. This finding was that this research project was unable to definitively determine the extent to which the performance of USMAPS students in EN 101 is attributable to the USMAPS English program. The genesis of this research project was my interest in looking at the USMAPS English program to attempt to determine how well that program was performing its mission of preparing its students for USMA

English, specifically EN 101. The hope, of course, of those responsible for the USMAPS English program has always been that it was performing that mission well and that it would impact its students in a positive, enduring manner. The crux of the problem, though, as it always is with program assessment, is actually determining the impact of the program in question. Fundamentally, studies of this nature are always inductive at their root because they deal with probability, not certainty. Logicians have had many erudite, esoteric discussions about the nature of reason and the nature, more specifically, of induction and deduction, but fundamentally the former deals with the probability that a conclusion follows from its premises, while the latter deals with whether the conclusion follows with certainty from its conclusion, i.e., whether the argument is valid. Because of the very nature of knowledge and because of the specific nature of the knowledge involved with this study, this study was inductive in nature, meaning that, at best, it could establish its conclusions—whatever they might end up being—with a high degree of probability.

With that condition as a starting point, the next concern was how long the impact of the USMAPS English program—whatever it might be—could be said to impact its students. Arguably, and anecdotally, many USMAPS graduates and/or their parents have said that the USMAPS program in general and the English program in particular had "lifelong" and "life-changing" impacts on its graduates. Four years ago, for example, during the annual Parents' Weekend, a time set aside for the family and friends of Cadet Candidates to visit and learn about USMAPS and a time that includes briefings by instructors to the family and friends of their students, an active duty Lieutenant (three star) General approached me and said that he had seen "an enormous change for the better" in his son during the little more than two months that he had been there. Last year, that same Lieutenant General, retired by this point, was at USMAPS again, this time for business purposes, and he happened to see me; when he did, he approached me again and said that his son's experience at USMAPS had been "the single most important event in

his life" and that his time in the USMAPS English program had "transformed him" as a student. This kind of story has happened to almost every instructor at USMAPS and speaks volumes about the impact that the school and the English program has had on its students. However, from the rigorous perspective of hard-nosed, objective research, and in the context of this study, the key questions are how many students feel that the English program has impacted them positively, and to what degree, and how do those feelings coincide with their performance in subsequent English courses, and how long might that impact influence those students?

In the case of the USMAPS English program, the duration of that impact, whatever it may be, was for the purposes of this study deemed to be its impact on USMAPS students' performance in EN 101. This course is the first undergraduate English course that USMAPS students take—except for those very few Cadet Candidates who have taken college English courses prior to their arrival at USMAPS—and it occurs during their first semester at West Point, only a few months after their completion of USMAPS English. It is reasonable to conclude that many of the things students learn and refine in the USMAPS English program—study habits, critical reading ability, argumentative essay writing—remain with them and impact them for the rest of their lives, but the connection between what they learned in this program and its demonstrable impact on them becomes more tenuous as time passes, so the focus of this study was the possible relationship between USMAPS English preparation and performance in EN 101. Moreover, once a student has completed EN 101, that student's performance in subsequent English courses has obviously been attenuated to some degree—perhaps a great degree—by what he or she learned or did not learn in EN 101, which was the other main reason for restricting this study to USMAPS English and EN 101.

Even within that relatively narrow framework—two courses, one of which, USMAPS English, was completed and then followed by the second one, EN 101, only a few months later—attempting to determine the impact of the first course upon the second

one is extremely difficult. As this study has stated on a few occasions, the enormity of that challenge is contained in one simple phrase: isolating the variable. One of the two parts of the conceptual framework for this study is essentially an input, intervention, output model, with the input being the Cadet Candidates, the intervention being their USMAPS English experience, and the output being their performance in EN 101 as measured by their final grade in that course. The rub, of course, is "determining" the "extent" of the impact of that program upon its students' performance.

Because of the nature of causality—a topic addressed by some of the greatest minds in history, most of which arrived at the conclusion that causality always includes some degree of indeterminacy—every researcher who has tried to determine the extent of the impact of an input upon an output has faced the same challenge of isolating the effect of the variable in question. Moreover, as this study's literature review has shown, research in education has perennially faced this same problem, with widely varying degrees of success. Every study discussed in my review of the relevant literature on remediation grappled with this challenge; some arrived at plausible, although still not unchallengeable, conclusions, while other reached what were at best perplexing conclusions. In every case, though, questions remained about the true impact of the variable in question: for this research project, the impact of remediation upon its students' performance in subsequent courses.

For a slightly different and possibly illuminating perspective on the problem of indeterminate causality, we might consider the difference between necessary and sufficient causation. In the case of the revised USMAPS English curriculum, it very well may be the case that the curriculum is sufficient to cause the observed improvement in performance. In that case, one could in fact assert that the program caused the improvement. However, even that claim would not be enough to isolate the effect of the change in the curriculum because that program might not be necessary for the improved EN 101 performance. That is, there may very well be a myriad of causes sufficient to

cause the performance benefit in question, and one would ultimately not know which cause, or which combination of causes, was in play at the time of the observed improvement. Ultimately, even if one could demonstrate that the revised curriculum "could" cause the observed improvement in EN 101 performance, one could never demonstrate that it "did" cause it because of the literally countless other variables that very well could have caused the change, unbeknownst to the researcher.

Conclusion

Given the inability of this study to definitively determine the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students' performance in EN 101, it is reasonable to ask what I hope for at this point. My response takes the form of three thoughts. First, as I explain in the final chapter of this dissertation, "The Destination, and Beyond," I believe that this study has much to offer in the way of themes, lessons, and possible contributions to the literature about remediation. Second, one of the key words in Finding Seven is "definitively." Although the discussion regarding Finding Seven provides a detailed account of my concerns about the strength of the relationship between USMAPS English and how its students perform in EN 101, those concerns focus upon the cautionary note of drawing "definitive" conclusions about that relationship. Conversely, though, and as I tried to make very clear throughout Chapter Five but especially with respect to Findings One, Two, Four, and Five, this project has developed a body of research and then analyzed that research in a way that has given me strong confidence in asserting that faculty and students alike perceive that USMAPS students are well prepared for EN 101, that the seeming anomaly of underperformance by USMAPS "just below" students may very well be accounted for by further research into CEER scores, and that the significantly revised USMAPS English curriculum quite

plausibly had a positive impact on its students' ability to better meet the challenges of EN 101.

Third, and most importantly, what I hope for at this point is that I and many others will continue the project of making the USMAPS English program as strong as possible via continued research, thought, and trial and error. That research can take many forms, from overarching projects such as this one to much more focused, limited projects seeking to examine in detail one particular aspect of USMAPS English such as its grammar instruction or very structured writing program, but in all cases the mindset and underlying thoughts must be to continually ask "How can we get better?" Additionally, the human condition, including research of all types, has shown on countless occasions that the way forward often involves many detours and wrong turns, and as the Director of the USMAPS English Department, I plan to continue conducting annual investigations of our curriculum and results, with the full realization that those investigations and their aftermath will involve wrong turns, but wrong turns that we will in turn examine and attempt to rectify. Having said that, though, my ultimate answer to the excellent question of "What do I hope for now?" is that, for all of the reasons stated throughout this study—but especially this study's findings; feedback from students, faculty, and Academy leaders; and my own observations—I have a great deal of confidence that the USMAPS English program is a vibrant, self-reflective, valuable program, and I hope that it will get even stronger, by virtue of continued research, thought, and reflection.

Chapter VI

THE DESTINATION, AND BEYOND: THEMES, LESSONS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Overview

What is to be done? These words, probably originating from the Russian literary figure Nikolai Chernyashevsky but immortalized by Leo Tolstoy and then Vladimir Lenin in works of an eponymous title, succinctly but powerfully capture this study's status as it moves to its final stage. Thus far, this study has provided its framework in an opening chapter, continued via a detailed discussion of the almost unique contexts of USMAPS and USMA, and moved to a review of the relevant literature. This study then presented an in-depth description of the methods it used to gather its data and of how it conducted its first level of analysis: making sense of its aggregate data to arrive at the results of that data. Next came its penultimate and arguably most important—to that point in its journey—section: a statement of its findings and a comprehensive description of how its second-level analysis of its data results led to those findings. What remains is essentially to attempt to answer the question with which this chapter opens, and the answer to that question is to conduct this study's third level of analysis: making meaning of the seven findings examined in detail in Chapter V.

At this point in many research projects, the researcher states her or his results in the form of conclusions and recommendations. These thoughts stem directly from the third-level-analysis addressed above, and these conclusions and recommendations serve as the

capstone of the project in question. What this chapter will instead do is present this study's third-level analysis of its findings through a series of themes and key lessons. These themes are not conclusions or recommendations, per se, although they certainly contain this study's explicit as well as implied conclusions and recommendations; rather, they are, in essence, large-scale units of meaning that serve as the framework for this study's conclusions and recommendations and that essentially explore the "big picture" (Vinz) aspects of this research project. Another way to view these themes is as scaffolding, upon which this project's specific conclusions and recommendations rest. There are five such themes for this research project, and each of them will be presented in short order so that the reader will know what lies ahead in this, the final chapter. Additionally, each theme will be carefully considered through a series of tightly wound discussions focusing on the link between that theme and relevant parts of this study, followed by an analysis of those links that will result in a number of conclusions and recommendations linked to each theme. This chapter will then present the key lessons regarding this project, before moving to its conclusion.

Themes, Research Questions, and Findings

The five themes for this research project are below. They are provided as sentence fragments because that style best captures their essence of being themes, not definitive conclusions or recommendations.

1. The importance of letting the data speak for itself.
2. The contributions that this study can make to curricular development.
3. This study's insights regarding assessments.
4. School, and classroom, culture in light of this study's findings.
5. The degree to which the conclusions and recommendations of this study are transferrable to other institutions of higher learning.

Before commencing the discussion of these themes, it will be worthwhile for me to briefly re-consider this project's fundamental underpinnings because of their foundational importance in beginning that project, giving it shape and direction, and molding its evolution. Those essential elements are the research problem, the purpose statement, the research questions, and the findings. These four elements worked collectively to lead this study to this point, and as such they are directly linked to and responsible for the themes listed above and the lessons and contributions that appear in forthcoming paragraphs.

Research problem: The problem that this study investigated was the existing gap in knowledge regarding the efficacy of the USMAPS English program regarding how well it has been preparing its students for the USMA English program, specifically EN 101. This problem was both surprising—given the kind of data-driven, assessment-oriented people responsible for USMA and USMAPS—and important—given the importance of the USMA and USMAPS missions.

Research purpose: The purpose of this research project was to investigate the USMAPS English curriculum and the performance of USMAPS graduates—and perceptions of that performance—in their core English courses at West Point, but especially EN 101, in an attempt to determine the extent to which that curriculum prepares Cadet Candidates for success in the English program at West Point and in order to develop curricular reforms in the USMAPS English program that will better prepare USMAPS students for success in their core English classes at USMA and perhaps offer valuable insights to other post-secondary college preparatory institutions. This purpose statement captures in one sentence all of the essential elements of this study and as such is a useful touchstone for the upcoming discussion of themes, lessons, and contributions because keeping this purpose in mind provides an easy reference for the linkage between the beginning and ending of this project.

Research Questions

- Research Question One: How do USMA Department of English and Philosophy (DEP) faculty, Direct Admits, and former USMAPS students perceive others' or their own preparation for EN 101 as measured through interviews, classroom observations, surveys, and a focus group discussion?
- Research Question Two: How do USMAPS graduates perform in EN 101—and the three other core English courses—with respect to their Direct Admit counterparts when the two groups are compared on the basis of final course grades?
- Research Question Three: How do the perceptions in Research Question One compare to the data from Research Question Two?
- Research Question Four: To what extent can any of the results stemming from Research Questions One through Three be determined to arise from students' experience in the USMAPS English program?

These research questions arise from the purpose of this research project and encapsulate the fairly specific areas that this project investigated in order to address that purpose. Finally, below are the findings that flowed directly from an analysis of the data collected in an attempt to provide answers to the research questions.

Findings

- Finding One: Based on their interview and survey responses and actions in the classroom, USMA English instructors believed USMAPS graduates to be well prepared for EN 101 and on par with their Direct Admit counterparts.
- Finding Two: Based on their interviews, focus group discussion, and survey results, USMAPS graduates perceived themselves to be well prepared for EN 101.

- Finding Three: USMAPS students consistently had slightly lower GPAs—an average of approximately .3 on a four point scale, or approximately one-third of a letter grade—in EN 101 than the GPAs of Direct Admits.
- Finding Four: USMAPS "just below" students—those who were just below the threshold for direct admission to USMA and who had SAT verbal scores in the middle tercile of their USMAPS class—had slightly lower GPAs in EN 101 than did the Direct Admit "just above" students: those who were just above the threshold for direct admission to USMA and had SAT verbal scores in the bottom fifth of their USMA class.
- Finding Five: Students who had studied under the revised USMAPS English curriculum put into effect for Academic Year (AY) 2012-2013 and AY 2013-2014 had an EN 101 GPA .17 higher than those USMAPS students who had studied under the English curriculum in effect for the two academic years prior to the revised curriculum: AY 2010-2011 and 2011-2012.
- Finding Six: There exists a close connection between USMA English faculty and USMAPS student perception of USMAPS student preparation for EN 101 and corresponding USMAPS student performance in EN 101.
- Finding Seven: This study was unable to definitively determine the extent to which the performance of USMAPS students in EN 101 is attributable to the USMAPS English program.

Theme One

One of the cardinal principles of any research project is to let the data speak for itself, and this principle serves as the basis for the first theme of this chapter, a theme that is closely connected to all four of this study's research questions. This principle rests at the heart of any research because without this principle, the whole point of the project—discovery—is naught. Ironically, though, one of the key things I have learned during this

research odyssey is to beware of phrases such as "research indicates" or "the research suggests." The reason for the cautionary attitude is found in the literature review of this dissertation, specifically the part that discusses a number of articles in detail, with respect to these articles' problems stemming from data. Whether the problems manifested themselves because of insufficient data, unrepresentative data, contradictory data, or data that simply did not allow the researcher to answer the question, I recall being surprised on a number of occasions that the phrase "research indicates" was connected to data that, to my mind, did not indicate what was being claimed to follow from that data. Hence, by the end of my journey through the literature relating to my project, and especially the research relating to remediation, I had assumed a very cautious attitude about data and was even more determined than I had been at the onset of my project to "let the cards fall as they may" in terms of what the data indicate with respect to my research. Moreover, and aside from the specifics addressed in this study's literature review, history is replete with examples of researchers not letting the data speak for themselves, for a variety of reasons ranging from the researcher's fervent desire to reach a conclusion other than that indicated by the data to instances of the data being misunderstood or misinterpreted by the researcher.

With respect to this study of the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students' performance in EN 101, I admittedly began that study with a number of notions and, frankly, hopes. Based on what I had heard from a variety of people—several of them colleagues of mine—over more than a decade of teaching at West Point, I expected that the USMA English faculty would be somewhat negative toward Prepsters with respect to their preparation for and performance in EN 101. Additionally, based on what I knew of USMAPS students, I expected that they would consider themselves to be somewhat under-prepared for college-level English, given their lower high school grades and standardized test scores. Conversely, I was for obvious reasons, given my five years' teaching at USMAPS and my position as Director of the USMAPS English Dept., hoping

that I would find that these notions would be false and that faculty and USMAPS students alike would report that they perceived USMAPS students—and themselves, respectively—to be well prepared for EN 101. These conflicting feelings were with me throughout my research, and I did my very best to "let the data speak for themselves" with respect to what data I attempted to collect, how I collected it, and then how I analyzed and made meaning of it.

Based on the results of the interviews and focus group discussion I conducted, surveys I administered, and observations I did—all of the ways in which this project's qualitative data were collected—I was quite surprised by the data that resulted from those efforts. As described in detail in the methodology and findings & analysis chapters, I took careful steps to be as impartial and objective as possible during these collection and analysis efforts. Be that as it may, the data spoke clearly to the perception on the part of instructor and instructed that the instructed were well prepared by the USMAPS English program for the foundational English course in the USMA humanities curriculum, and I let those data speak for themselves in terms of my findings and subsequent analysis of those data.

With respect to the quantitative data for this research project, the "speaking for itself" aspect of the data was more complicated. Several areas of investigation resulted in data that were expected, and, to be candid, not problematic as far as I was concerned. Given what I knew to be the lower starting position—based on almost every measurable criteria of selection for and admission to USMA—of USMAPS students as a whole with respect to their Direct Admit counterparts, I fully expected that such measures as Prepster USMA graduation rates and GPAs and course grades in EN 101 would be lower to some degree. As this dissertation's findings and analysis chapter makes clear, those expectations were fully borne out by the data.

However, the quite challenging part of "letting the data speak" manifested itself during what I considered to be one of the two most important quantitative data

investigations of this study: the "just above/just below" examination of those students who seemed to be quite similar in many ways and were in fact quite similar with respect to what had been established as a very important indicator of EN 101 performance, SAT verbal scores. The impetus behind this part of this study was to attempt to isolate the variable of the impact of the USMAPS English program on its students' performance in EN 101 by grouping together students with similar SAT verbal scores so that this examination could compare "apples to apples." Moreover, my hope was that the USMAPS students in this part of the study would have appreciably higher EN 101 GPAs than did their Direct Admit cohort because the former had experienced the year-long, rigorous USMAPS English program, whereas the latter had not. As Chapter V made clear, though, not only did the Prepsters not have appreciably higher EN 101 GPAs than those of the corresponding Direct Admits, they had GPAs that were lower: marginally lower, and not lower every year, but lower overall nonetheless.

My initial reaction to these results was surprise, followed by dismay. I also wondered if "the data" were somehow skewed and if I had asked the right questions and drawn up the right groupings of students. As things turned out, of course, I actually had not developed the most representative groupings of USMAPS students and Direct Admits because further investigation strongly suggested that the CEER score was a much better indicator of the key characteristics of each group than was the SAT verbal score alone. That fact stemmed from two key "non-observables" that the CEER score captured that the SAT verbal score did not—high school class rank and SAT math scores—and the former of these two factors has been shown countless times to strongly predict student academic performance in college. Of course, though, had I not let the data speak for itself, I would not have been prompted to further investigate this result, and I would not have learned, specifically, how limited in some ways the SAT verbal score was and, generally, that sometimes what seems to be a foolproof way to investigate a phenomenon of interest is actually quite limited or even misleading.

The conclusion that stems from this part of my research is that following the dictum of letting the data speak for itself is indeed important and in fact had a significant impact on this research project by causing me to further investigate arguably one of the two most important aspects of that project: the results of my "just above" and "just below" analysis. The other arguably most important part of this project was its investigation of the impact of a significantly revised USMAPS English curriculum on its students' performance in EN 101, but the discussion in Chapter V of this investigation makes it clear that the result of that investigation was what I had thought and hoped it would be: results suggest that the new curriculum did increase its students' performance in EN 101. Thus, there was certainly no temptation to not let these data speak for themselves, although they did stir within me a feeling I had not considered: a compulsion to investigate these data to ensure that I was not glossing over anything simply because the results were obviously pleasing to me. My efforts to counteract that tendency are well documented in the discussion in this part of the findings and research chapter, but, again, the lesson of letting the data speak for itself—regardless of whether the data denies or, in the case of the revised curriculum, confirms the researcher's presuppositions—rings loud and clear. If that lesson had not impacted me the way that it did, I would not have performed the two essential but tedious tasks of validating my finding regarding the impact of the revised USMAPS English curriculum by assessing the relative strengths of the "pre" and "post" classes or the relative rigor of EN 101 before and after the revised curriculum, two steps that served to let the data speak for itself by confirming what the data initially seemed to indicate.

The first recommendation that follows from this conclusion is that every researcher, particularly those neophyte researchers such as I, heed the age-old advice to let the data speak, throughout the research process. Beginning with the kinds of questions to be asked, proceeding to the research design, and moving on to the execution and analysis of the research project, the researcher must be ever mindful to attempt to get at

the objective nature of the thing under investigation and to never allow pre-conceived notions or desired outcomes to influence the research. In the cases when the data confirms a researcher's preconceived notions, he or she must let the data speak for itself by conducting follow-on critical analysis and other kinds of research in order to ensure—as best possible—that the data really is speaking for itself, as opposed to simply confirming via the researcher's initial interpretation of the data what that researcher was hoping to find. This recommendation is obviously easier said than done, but this study has several manifestations of when violating this principle would have seriously jeopardized the integrity and worth of the most important parts of this study.

The second recommendation stemming from this first theme is that more research be done within the next year or two on what I believe are this study's two most important areas: the relationship among SAT verbal scores, CEER scores, and EN 101 GPAs, along with the impact of the revised curriculum. The second theme of this chapter will speak in depth to the latter concern, the revised curriculum, but the former topic is one of such great promise, and one that involves so much data of so many kinds, that it fits perfectly within this theme of letting the data speak for itself. The discussion of the relative statistical significance of SAT verbal scores and CEER scores to EN 101 GPAs was explored in detail in the analysis of that finding, but I believe that there is much more material to be mined in this area. I addressed many of those specific points in that aforementioned analysis, but sometime within the next year, I plan to re-visit this topic because it holds so much promise, ranging from everything including future USMAPS English curricula—should, for example, that curriculum seriously consider a return to the SAT preparation that was so heavily emphasized in the 1960s and 1970s?—to a detailed examination of the possible impact of the "non-observables" such as high school transcripts, extracurricular activities, socioeconomic status, and race on USMAPS students' predicted performance in EN 101. Studying the topic of future USMAPS English curricula would, as indicated, involve further analysis of the research relating to

possible links between standardized scores and student performance—whether those links exist, and, if they do, how to help Cadet Candidates improve those scores—while studying the impact of "non-observables" such as socioeconomic status and race would entail even broader, more difficult analysis. However, as much literature has shown, there are crucially important links among socioeconomic status, race, and student performance, so the kind of careful, close analysis needed to parse those relationships with respect to USMAPS and its students' performance at USMA in general and in EN101 in particular would clearly be well worth the effort.

Theme Two

The second theme of this chapter concerns the contributions this study can make to curricular development because of the lessons learned during the research process for that study; this theme is also closely connected to all four research questions of this study. Curricular development is a very wide-ranging topic and can address a myriad of topics—everything from a particular aspect of a certain curriculum at an individual school to whether our nation should have a national curriculum, a discussion of which has most recently manifested itself in Common Core standards and their impact on K-12 curricula—but this discussion of that topic will focus upon the following specifics: the general impact of curricular change on learning; the specific changes incorporated into the USMAPS English curriculum during Academic Years (AY) 12-13 and 13-14 and observed resultant changes in student performance in EN 101; and possible implications of these changes for curricula in other departments at USMAPS, for the two sister preparatory schools of USMAPS—the Naval Academy Preparatory School (NAPS) and the Air Force Academy Preparatory School (AFAPS)—for the USMA English Department, and for other preparatory schools that have the similar mission of preparing students for admission into Tier One universities.

Study after study—several of which are in the literature review for this dissertation—has shown the strong correlation between the quality of a student's high school coursework and the quality of that student's performance in college, so much so that this link is essentially accepted as common knowledge among educators, parents, and students. Since the quality of that coursework intuitively depends largely upon the collective quality of the individual courses within that overall coursework, and since the quality of those individual courses is in turn powerfully influenced by the curricula for those courses—the framework for them that establishes what will be studied, and to what extent, and how learning will be assessed—it follows that curricula exert an outsized influence upon student learning. There are clearly many other factors that impact student learning—quality of instruction, student motivation and ability, level of resourcing of the school in question, etc.—but one of those key factors is undoubtedly curricula, and the importance of that influence appears to be evident in the impact that significantly revising the USMAPS English curriculum had upon its students' performance in their follow-on initial undergraduate English course, EN 101.

As discussed in the findings and analysis chapter, the USMAPS English curriculum underwent a substantial revision beginning in the summer of 2012. This revision was put into effect for AY 12-13, and the lessons learned from that academic year were incorporated into further revision of that curriculum during the summer of 2013 for inclusion into the AY 13-14 curriculum. Those changes were prompted by faculty concern that the extant curriculum, while strong in many respects, was ultimately not doing enough to foster its students' critical reading ability and their ability to effectively compose argumentative essays. A large number of changes were made to this curriculum as a result of hundreds and hundreds of faculty-hours devoted to that process during the summers of 2012 and 2013, and the details of those changes are addressed in Chapter V. However, the essence of those curricular changes was the inclusion of critical reading into the curriculum at a much earlier time during the academic year—literally beginning

with the first week of classes—and the reading that was incorporated consisted of more sophisticated, difficult texts that also contained many more non-fiction argumentative essays than had been in the existing curriculum; the development of an argumentative writing program that focused much more heavily on argumentative writing—writing based on fiction but especially on non-fiction sources—and that was quite methodical and rigorous in that it required students to submit pre-writing, outlines, drafts, final drafts, and corrected copies of the final drafts, in the context of instructors having an individual conference with each of their students for each major writing assignment, which were two per quarter; the development of a pre- and post-assessment process that focused on students' initial and then final performance in grammar, critical reading, and, most importantly, argumentative writing; and, ultimately, a process of curricular development that was tied very closely to the "parent" department of the USMAPS English Department, the USMA English Department, and what that next level of learning would require of USMAPS students and how students would be best prepared for that level via the English curriculum they studied at USMAPS.

The results of this effort were encouraging. In the final analysis, a group of students who were overall somewhat less qualified, based on CEER scores—the "post" test group—and who underwent an EN 101 course that was somewhat more rigorous—as reflected in lower GPAs in that course—performed at a higher level than the control group of students, even though this latter group of students was somewhat more qualified and had undergone a slightly less rigorous experience in EN 101. Clearly, there are many variables to be considered in this context, but the just as clearly key variables of student qualification, rigor of the course involved, and the curriculum that prepared both groups of students for this comparison combine to strongly suggest that the revised USMAPS curriculum was at least partly responsible for the improved EN 101 GPA observed in those students who underwent the intervention of that curriculum as opposed to those who did not.

Several important conclusions stem from the curriculum revision aspect of this study, but two are particularly important with respect to this study. The first is that curriculum revision can have a significant impact on student performance. As discussed in the preceding two paragraphs and in much more detail in this study's findings and analysis chapter, the revisions made to the USMAPS English curriculum manifestly impacted its students' performance in a positive manner in EN 101. The second important conclusion stemming from this part of this investigation is that the kind of curriculum revision incorporated into the USMAPS English curriculum offers great promise for that kind of curriculum revision—and, more importantly, its resultant positive effects—in other programs and other institutions. Granted, every institution of learning is unique, and generalizing results from one institution to another is an exercise fraught with peril because, for example, as this study showed with its reliance upon SAT verbal scores to compare two key groups of students, sometimes entities that appear to be quite similar to each other are in fact different in important ways. However, for the reasons stated in the following paragraphs, it seems as though the lessons learned from the USMAPS English curriculum revision may very well be applicable to a number of other institutions.

USMAPS is an almost unique institution, given its combination of academic, military, physical, and moral dimensions as well as its purpose of preparing its students for essentially one and only one institution: the United States Military Academy. However, underneath that apparent uniqueness lie many key features that USMAPS shares with a number of other institutions; additionally, and more interestingly, there also exist many aspects of USMAPS that make it and its Department of English more strongly connected to a much wider range of institutions than one might initially think. Ultimately, these connections establish a bridge between the lessons learned from the USMAPS English curriculum revision process and curricula revision processes that may offer great promise for a number of institutions.

Obviously, and as discussed in the context chapter of this study, USMAPS is quite similar to its parent school, USMA. Beyond that close relationship, though, lie a number of other close relationships that offer great promise regarding the generalizability of the USMAPS English curriculum revision process. The first set of such schools is the sister preparatory schools of USMAPS: NAPS and AFAPS, the respective preparatory schools of the Naval and Air Force Academies. These three schools are certainly not carbon copies of one another, but they are quite similar with respect to mission, organization, student body, faculty, and size. In addition to USMA and the sister preparatory schools of USMAPS, a third group of schools with a strong similarity to USMAPS consists of all of those largely civilian preparatory schools whose mission is to prepare their students for admission to very competitive colleges and universities comparable in selectivity to West Point. Several of these schools are discussed in the literature review of this study—Rosemary Choate, Blair Academy, etc.—and they obviously differ from USMAPS in many ways, including size, composition of student body, cost, and focus, but one aspect of their focus makes them quite comparable to USMAPS: their need to enhance the academic performance of their students in order to enable those students to gain admission to a selective institution of higher learning. This commonality implies that lessons learned, for example those regarding curriculum reform, at USMAPS could apply quite well to these types of schools as well as to USMA, NAPS, and AFAP.

With respect to recommendations resulting from this second theme and its conclusions, the first is that USMAPS English reach out to the USMA Department of English and Philosophy (DEP), as well as the English Departments at NAPS and AFAP, with the results of the USMAPS English curriculum revision. This outreach could take many forms, but one obvious one is for the Director of the USMAPS English Department to contact his counterparts at USMA, NAPS, and AFAP to alert them of these results and offer to send the details to them and to engage in dialogue about them. Additionally, in-person visits with the Head of DEP will be easy to arrange because of the physical

proximity of USMAPS to USMA, and in-person visits with the English Director at NAPS are a distinct possibility because of the relative proximity of USMAPS to NAPS: approximately two hundred miles. Another possible, quite positive manifestation of this kind of exchange would be that the USMAPS English Department would learn of additional points that it should consider with respect to further curriculum reform, in addition to conveying to these organizations what it learned as a result of its curriculum revision process.

A second recommendation regarding curriculum revision is that USMAPS English reach out to a much wider audience than its parent institution and sister preparatory schools by contacting other preparatory schools that focus on preparing young women and men for admission to selective colleges and universities. This kind of outreach could manifest itself in a variety of ways, but some of the most plausible ones include the USMAPS English faculty's presenting the results of our recent curriculum revision efforts in visits to various independent schools throughout the Northeast, an area easily accessible to us, as well as by presenting those results at conferences attended by administrators and faculty of independent schools, such as NCTE conferences. Additionally, we could publish our results via articles in journals read by these administrators and faculty, publications such as *English Journal* and *ISA Journal*. This recommendation clearly involves more coordination than the first recommendation, but it also offers the possibility of even greater shared learning because of the very dissimilarities discussed in an earlier paragraph that give pause to whether this kind of coordination would be productive. These differences understandably give rise to concerns about the plausibility of establishing connections among these schools, but they also offer great promise because while these schools share the same fundamental mission, they operate in quite different realms, but it is those very differences that may lead to any number of epiphanies on the part of USMAPS or these other preparatory schools. Fundamentally, there is a reason why organizations that are diverse—in all kinds of

areas—tend to outperform those that are not, and leveraging that diversity of thought and practice among these two on-the-surface very different kinds of preparatory schools offers the promise of great benefit to both sets of schools, within the arena of curriculum reform but also well beyond.

Theme Three

Learning, writ large, is the ultimate goal of education, but what comprises learning is an extraordinarily contested question, as is what comprises education. Regardless of what one considers to be "learning" or "education," though, assessing learning is an almost universally acknowledged necessary part of the educational process within the vast majority of schools, and this study's analysis of the USMAPS English program's assessments revealed the basis for the third theme of this chapter: this study's insights regarding assessments. Those insights center upon pre- and post-testing, frequency of assessments, recursive assessments, and assessments that are closely connected to the mission of the institution in question. These insights stemmed especially from Research Question Four and this study's finding that the revised USMAPS English curriculum may very well have had a positive impact on its students' performance in EN 101, an impact arguably resulting in part from the assessments portion of that curriculum.

Assessment is admittedly an extraordinarily contentious and complex topic, as evidenced by the political turmoil it has generated and the mountain of literature that has been written about it. The vast majority of American schools have as part of their foundation a system of assessments, but, again, trying to find a widely agreed upon conception of what constitutes a valid and useful assessment is an exercise in futility. Very broadly, though, and for the purposes of this study, my concept of assessment is that it is a systematic endeavor to use specific vehicles to attempt to determine what students have learned as a result of their study within a certain program. This conception is

obviously immediately debatable, but I believe that it is also plausible because of its focus upon several widely agreed upon aspects of assessment.

Assessment has been with American education since its beginnings, and it has generated controversy for just as long. As Pulliam and Patten point out in their *The History and Social Foundations of American Education*, "The idea that schools and educators should be responsible for their actions [via assessment of those efforts] is not new. Annual reports of Horace Mann and journal entries articles of Henry Barnard carried criticisms of inadequate or mistaken pedagogical efforts" (326). That controversy stems from many sources, among them an understandable reluctance on the part of teachers to be held accountable for something as complex and sometimes beyond their control as student learning and questions regarding what should be assessed and how it should be assessed. The USMAPS English program faced those same challenges, and these concerns were the backdrop for many a spirited discussion amongst the English faculty regarding how to best use assessment to help students accomplish the course's primary objectives, all of which revolve around critical reading and argumentative essay writing, in addition to speaking, documenting, and performing well on standardized testing. After two summer's worth of debates about the assessment question, though, along with all of the work resulting from those debates, the English Department settled upon a series of assessments that it incorporated into its curriculum and that are, I believe, one of the most important reasons why that curriculum has had the very positive results it has had, as evidenced through the previously discussed revised English curriculum as well as feedback from students, faculty, and outside organizations such as the Dean's Office at USMA.

The four major aspects of the USMAPS English program of assessments that speak to the theme of what that program can offer as insights regarding assessments are centered upon pre- and post-testing, frequency of assessments, recursive assessments, and assessments that are closely connected to the ultimate purpose of the English program:

preparing its students for success in EN 101. When the process of revising the English curriculum had been completed a second time, at the end of the summer of 2014, the assessments for that program totaled fifty one. That number is at first glance almost alarmingly large because it is certainly possible to "over test" students, but a closer examination of that number reveals it to be much more reasonable. First, the USMAPS English program is class-time intensive; it meets every day for seventy-five minutes, for a total of approximately one hundred thirty lessons. Second, many of those fifty-one assessments are relatively small in scale, as is the case, for example, with the thirty reading quizzes, each of which is given at the beginning of class and requires only approximately five minutes of students' time. Third, these assessments form the framework for a tightly-wound curriculum that is intensively focused on its objectives, so having a relatively large number of them is a tool that allows student and instructor to constantly focus their attention on what learning should be occurring within the classroom. Fundamentally, all of these assessments address, individually and/or collectively, pre- and post-testing, frequency of assessment, recursive assessment, and a close connection to the parent organization, and upcoming paragraphs detail those characteristics.

An integral part of most assessment systems is determining the level at which students begin a course of study or program and then determining the level at which those students complete that course. In the case of the USMAPS English program, that aspect of an assessment system has been in place for a number of years regarding students' grammar and reading comprehension but not regarding their ability to write an argumentative essay. For the grammar and reading comprehension, respectively, the English faculty devised an in-house multiple choice assessment lasting sixty minutes and comprised of fifty questions for the former and used a national-level examination called the Nelson-Denny reading assessment for the latter. The grammar examination was quite difficult; the USMAPS student body normally averaged in the mid to high fifty percent

range for the pre-test, which was administered during the first week of class. For the Nelson-Denny assessment, students read a series of short reading selections and responded to multiple choice questions; this examination also had a vocabulary component that the faculty decided to not use because vocabulary development is taught in USMAPS English through reading and in-class discussions of those readings.

The observed improvement on both of these assessments was dramatic and gratifying. For at least the past five years, and as noted previously, students' average score on the pre-assessment grammar examination was approximately fifty-five to sixty percent. On the post-test grammar assessment, that average score regularly improved by at least twenty percentage points, or two entire letter grades. An average in the mid-high seventies may not seem impressive for any examination, but, for comparison, I took this examination the first year I taught at USMAPS—2010—and scored an eighty-eight percent on it, after having taught English at West Point for twelve years. The improvement in scores for the Nelson-Denny examination was also noteworthy. This test's results are measured in "grade equivalents," and the average grade equivalent for the entering USMAPS class has been approximately 12.8. After almost a year of intensive reading, though, that average score increased by an average of more than one full grade equivalent, to 13.9, on a scale in which 18 is the maximum score.

Unfortunately, though, until two years ago, there was no pre- and post-test for USMAPS students' ability to write an argumentative essay, but that omission was rectified with the advent of the Basic Skills Writing Examination (BWSE) and Term End Examination (TEE), the details of which are in this study's chapter on context. Essentially, these examinations are mirror images of the three-hour final examination that culminates EN 101. As stated in Chapter Five, this examination is arguably the biggest hurdle for USMAPS students in EN 101; for example, of the five USMAPS students who failed EN 101 in the fall of 2014, all five of them failed the TEE. Thus, this examination is also arguably the most important writing Cadet Candidates do at USMAPS, both with

respect to indicating their readiness for the rigors of EN 101 as well as to helping some of them gain admission to USMA, which it did on nine occasions last year by providing evidence that the students in question could write at a much higher level than that indicated by their standardized test scores or essays or grades in USMAPS English. When students took the BWSE at the beginning of each of the past school years, the battalion average was approximately sixty-five percent, a "high" F, which was not unexpected because the faculty used the same grading standards on the pre-test as on the post-test. By the end of the year, though, that average had risen to approximately eighty percent, an area right between a B- and C+, a noteworthy improvement and one that strongly suggested not only that students were, on average, prepared to tackle this challenging component of EN 101 but also that they had made great strides during USMAPS English regarding their ability to write a high-level argumentative essay.

The key part of this discussion about pre- and post-testing in the context of possible insights about assessments that USMAPS English might offer is that this regimen of testing has enabled students to literally see what kind of progress they have made during that English program, and it has enabled the English faculty to see that progress as well. "Thinking" or "feeling" that students have made progress is an integral part of teaching, but being able to measure that progress verifies, or perhaps discounts, those thoughts or feelings. There has been no study of how this system of pre- and post-testing has impacted student performance in USMAPS English, but such a study would be worthwhile, and the data are available to support it. Even though there has not been such a study done, students have noted time and again on their semester- and course-end feedback that being able to see their progress on these key events was gratifying and motivated them to work harder to achieve as much improvement as possible.

Frequency of assessment is a frequently discussed aspect of assessments. Some educators advocate infrequent assessment so that teachers are not constantly focused on "teaching to the test," while others argue that if the assessments are properly constructed,

"teaching to the test" is exactly what teachers should be doing and in no way inhibits strong, imaginative teaching. Both of these positions have pros and cons, but the USMAPS English program philosophy is firmly in the latter camp, for two primary reasons, the sum total of which may offer insight to other institutions regarding this important aspect of assessment.

One primary reason why USMAPS English has frequent assessments is that its students are in a situation requiring many of them to make significant progress during a year that passes all too quickly, and these same students have many times come to USMAPS from high schools that were quite weak with respect to expectations and standards. Thus, these students literally do not know how to really study because they have in fact never studied to any extent prior to beginning USMAPS, and they cannot bring themselves to do the requisite studying without important and immediate consequences being attached to their work on an almost daily basis. In this vein, English faculty have noted time and again that their students devote their attention only to those parts of the curriculum which have consequences—points—attached to them, so three years ago the faculty made the decision to increase the number of assessments to account for this reality. As just one specific example, for years, students simply would not consistently read their assignments and engage with the text via annotation, marginal comments, or other mechanisms despite repeated admonitions from the faculty to do so. Last year, the English faculty began administering quizzes on almost every reading assignment, and these quizzes were designed so that students who read the assignment relatively carefully would do well on them, and those who had not, would not. All faculty noted a marked improvement in students' level of preparation after the advent of the reading quizzes, and this part of the English curriculum is probably here to stay.

The second key reason the USMAPS English faculty decided to use frequent assessments is that frequent assessment equates to frequent feedback on student progress. Again, given the task ahead of USMAPS students and their relatively low starting points

at the beginning of that task, it is imperative that they frequently receive what are called in the military "azimuth checks." These checks allow both student and instructor to have an almost constant finger on that student's learning pulse and to make adjustments when necessary; moreover, experience has shown that such adjustments are both frequently needed and often quite helpful. USMAPS English students know that they will be assessed roughly every second or third lesson on the extent of their mastery of the concepts being taught, and they have responded quite well to the challenge of these frequent assessments. One of my former students recently told me that "I'm so glad that I always knew I'd be responsible for the material. Having that mindset got me ready for Plebe English."

Every school is different, but the student comment above, combined with the discussion in the two paragraphs above, indicates that there is much to be said for frequent assessments, especially when dealing with a student population that has to make marked progress in a relatively short time span and that simply has not had in many cases a background of being held accountable. The next part of this third theme deals with recursive assessments, a part of the USMAPS English assessment program that was instituted only two years ago. In short, recursive assessments in this context means assessments that repeatedly address the same concepts and principles. My students know that I was an armor officer for many years, and the business end of the tank I operated for those years shot a round that travelled one mile per second and destroyed its target via kinetic energy. That type of engagement is a classic "fire and forget" mission: after one pulls the trigger, one moves on to the next target. This kind of engagement is not, however, the kind that benefits most students. Instead, most students learn best when afforded the opportunity—and challenge—of re-visiting a topic on multiple occasions, and it is this principle that underlies much USMAPS English instruction.

The best example of this type of assessment manifests itself in the grammar portion of the English curriculum. All too often, students believe that they simply have to study

the assigned material, demonstrate proficiency on the assessment connected to that material, and then move on to the next set of topics without retaining what they just finished studying. At USMAPS, though, the grammar instruction is constructed so that it first of all focuses on only essential elements of grammar and usage—e.g., passive vs. active voice, commas, semicolons, agreement, parallelism, fused and fragmentary sentences, among several others—and that it second of all comes back again and again to these concepts so that students realize that they must truly master the material, not simply "learn" it for one test and be done with it. The recursive nature of this instruction manifests itself in grammar quizzes and tests given throughout the school year on grammar material that was taught largely during the first quarter and then is reinforced via instruction reiterating this material to students in subsequent quarters and students' accompanying preparation for those assessments. Additionally, students must also correct all of the grammar mistakes that instructors annotate on all of their essays, and this process of having to actually read and, more importantly, react to instructor feedback has caused remarkable progress in students' ability to master the basics of correctness, as indicated by the quality of this aspect of their writing at the beginning and end of the school year.

These lessons regarding the recursive nature of USMAPS English assessments hopefully provide insight into the nature of this part of that assessment program, and these insights are almost certainly relevant to the English programs of many other institutions, to some degree. The final aspect of this third theme of Chapter VI—assessments—is the insights stemming from ensuring a close connectivity between a program's assessments and that program's goals. Very few education institutions, or even preparatory schools, have the kind of clearly defined charter that USMAPS does or the integral relationship it possesses with a higher institution, USMA. Be that as it may, the forthcoming discussion will hopefully provide insight into the advantages of that kind of connectivity, whatever the type of school, because, at root, all schools, from elementary

schools to graduate schools, are preparing their student for "the next level," and careful consideration of the specific things that the school in question can do to provide the best degree of that kind of preparation will almost always lead to positive results, as has been the case with USMAPS English.

The fundamental mission of the USMAPS English Department is to prepare its students for success in EN 101. Given that mission, it stands to reason that this department would work very closely with the USMA English Department. Coordination for that kind of cooperation did occur for many years, primarily through an annual visit of the USMAPS English faculty to the USMA English Department, but the more than one hundred miles separating the schools constrained those efforts. However, USMAPS moved to West Point in 2011, and coordination between these two departments has certainly been easier since then. Additionally, the twelve years of experience teaching at USMA English I brought to the USMAPS English Department has been very helpful for me as an individual instructor and for the department as a whole and has been the genesis of many of the changes discussed in this study, although those changes have certainly been due to the very hard work and insightful ideas of the entire USMAPS English faculty.

This close coordination between the two departments has taken many forms. Many of the changes put into effect in the revised English curriculum stemmed from the March 2012 memorandum (Appendix A) discussed in Chapter IV, and that memorandum was essentially vetted by the Head of the USMA Department of English, who also offered a number of very helpful improvements to that document. Additionally, the past three years, the Course Director for EN 101 has come to USMAPS to brief the English faculty about updates to that course and lessons-learned regarding the previous year's USMAPS students. Those briefings have enabled the two departments, actually, the two courses, for all intents and purposes, to work in tandem and frequently make necessary adjustments. Additionally, the EN 101 Course Director has, for the past three years, sent a detailed

roll-up of the performance of USMAPS students in EN 101 to the USMAPS English Director, who has been able to use that document to foment additional change within the USMAPS English Department. Finally, a program that was very helpful but that has not occurred since the move of USMAPS to West Point—and one that is resuming this fall—was the class visits done by USMAPS English instructors to EN 101 classes. These visits allowed English faculty from both departments to visit with one another at least briefly, and they allowed USMAPS instructors the opportunity to keep apprised of the nature of the EN 101 classroom experience.

Ultimately, this pattern of close coordination enabled USMAPS English to constantly update its assessments to ensure that they best prepared its students for success in EN 101. On a much larger scale, this kind of coordination offers many insights into the value of schools working closely with one another, whether they be elementary and middle schools, high schools and colleges, or preparatory schools and universities. There really is no substitute for the close meshing of programs of schools that have related missions, and attempts to align those programs closely with one another can almost certainly foster that meshing.

The third theme of this chapter—insights stemming from the USMAPS English program of assessments—has hopefully provided a window into what those insights are and how they might help other institutions. Ultimately, the assessment program of the USMAPS English Department is centered upon assessing students before and after they study the course's main objectives of developing critical reading ability and effective argumentative essay writing, frequently assessing their grasp of the subject matter in order to enable students and instructors alike to gauge their learning, giving students recursive assessments so that they realize that they need to master the material in question and so that instructors have the opportunity to re-visit—again and again—topics deemed of particular importance, and, finally, closely linking assessments with the organization that is the at the heart of the Prep School English Department mission: the USMA

Department of English and Philosophy. These factors are arguably at the heart of the success of USMAPS English program and provide fertile food for thought regarding how other institutions might use these principles to benefit their students.

Theme Four

This chapter's fourth theme, school—and classroom—culture in light of this study's findings and analysis, focuses on another topic of great importance to most schools: culture. As is the case with so many terms of great importance, culture understandably means many things to many people and is context dependent. Sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, and, of course, educators—among many other influential groups—all have their own focus with respect to defining and using this term. Culture is a term I have often thought about as I have looked at the world around me and wondered about all of the myriad impacts upon human behavior and thought, and, for me, culture is essentially a certain way of doing things for a certain group of people. Any definition of culture is going to be problematic because of what is does or does not address, but culture at its most fundamental, and arguably important, level always seems to boil down to a certain way of doing things for a certain group of people. There are countless cultures within the world, of all kinds of sizes and scopes. For this study, entities such as the American culture, the Southern (or Northern, Eastern, or Western) culture, the youth culture, and the military culture are among the cultures that are important.

For education, culture has been cited again and again as a foundational influence upon students. With respect to everything from Jonathon Kozol's "culture of poverty" to E.D. Hirsch's "culture of learning," educators have studied and posited claims about the effects of culture upon learning. This study's fourth theme focuses upon the culture of the school and classroom and not only its potential impact upon Cadet Candidates but also its possible insights for schools similar to as well as different from USMAPS. USMAPS

certainly has "a certain way of doing things for a certain group of people," and that culture has plausibly had an enormous impact on its students. That culture unsurprisingly has many facets, but four that offer great promise for study because of their large role in the USMAPS culture are standards, expectations, discipline, and support.

From literally their first minute at USMAPS, students are made aware in no uncertain terms that this institution has certain standards. Those standards take all forms and sizes and address everything from the very small such as the color of socks and how those socks will be folded and displayed within drawers to the very large such as standards regarding honorable behavior and the military code of conduct. These standards are obviously new to most USMAPS students, and they grate upon many of those students, but they also provide a framework for success for those students. It is difficult if not impossible for anyone to meet a standard if that person is not aware of that standard, and laying out its standards in the manner it does enables USMAPS to clearly inform its students of the parameters within which they must operate. Additionally, however, and very importantly, those standards do not occur in a vacuum. Staff and faculty frequently explain the reason(s) for standards, and, even more importantly, students seem to intuitively understand that these standards exist for a reason. Moreover, and probably most importantly, over time, students see how these standards lead to a smoothly functioning, highly efficient institution that is able to provide them with what they need in large part because of the environment these standards create.

These standards and this culture of standards manifest themselves quite clearly within the USMAPS classroom. As described in Chapter Four, the USMAPS classroom is a structured, disciplined, focused place, but it is also a place in which students have the space to voice their opinions without fear of unruly responses and in which they know that day after day they will be able to focus their efforts upon maximizing their learning potential. Standards within the USMAPS classroom are clear—class will begin and end on time, students must be in class on time, students must bring all of their required

materials to class, there will be no intrusions via cell phone, etc.—but, again, it is those standards that create the conditions within which a culture of learning and high expectations can take root.

Expectations matter. At USMAPS, there exist not only standards but the expectation that those standards will be met. One of the biggest challenges regarding setting standards is then enforcing those standards, and an enormously important aspect of whether those standards will be met is whether the expectation exists that they will. This culture of expectation is created at USMAPS through a variety of means, but all of these means serve to collectively let students know that the expectation is that they will meet the standard. On one end of the spectrum, this culture of expectation comes about through unyielding discipline, an element that lies at the center of the military as well as many successful non-military organizations. At the other end of the spectrum, though, lies constant, positive reinforcement that students truly are expected to not only uphold standards but also to do so in order to succeed.

Many students come to USMAPS wary of their chances for success at West Point, and one of the most important things USMAPS does is create within its students an expectation of success. In my classroom, for example, I tell my students that I "expect" them to do their homework and to do their best at learning the material and that doing so is not going to elicit high praise from me because my expectation is that they are in fact going to do their homework, etc. However, I also tell my students, especially once the semester is underway—USMAPS is on a quarter system for grading, but students stay with instructors for two quarters at a time, or a semester—that I fully expect that they are going to do well in EN 101, and beyond, at West Point. This kind of mindset of being expected to do well and being told that they will do well—given their hard work and positive attitude—has created within untold USMAPS students the expectation that they truly will do well, and student after student has told me during the past five years that this expectation of success was instrumental in the success they enjoyed at West Point.

Moreover, this culture of expectation exists not only in my classroom. All faculty at USMAPS have these same kinds of expectations for their students and effectively communicate those expectations to their students, with results quite similar to what has occurred within my classroom and beyond.

As mentioned in an earlier paragraph, discipline is part of the foundation of every military unit. George Washington himself claimed that "discipline is the most important characteristic of any military unit," and leader after leader has proclaimed the importance of discipline within the military context. Discipline, however, is clearly a key to success across many walks of life, and one of those walks is education. Success in education stems from a wide range of entities, but, for most people, having the discipline to stay focused on the task at hand, put forth the effort required to learn the material, and continue moving ahead even in the face of adversity and setback are essential elements of their success as students. Discipline is yet another term that defies precise definition, but its essence involves doing the things that one is supposed to be doing, even in the absence of supervision. Ironically, given this definition, life at USMAPS involves a great deal of supervision, but the ultimate goal of that supervision is for students to inculcate within themselves the "habit of mind" (Blau) that enables them to do the right thing, even when they are not being supervised.

Discipline at USMAPS takes many forms, whether the Uniform Code of Military Justice—the vehicle for administrative and judicial punishment—or simply a squad leader's telling a member of her squad to tuck in his shirt properly. Within the USMAPS classroom, and has been alluded to on a number of occasions already, discipline is an ever-present factor. Students are called to attention at the beginning and end of each class, and they realize that they must address their instructors and—more importantly—one another with courtesy. However, this culture of discipline ultimately serves not to constrain but rather to free. Students who are disciplined with respect to putting forth the effort to learn the material, with all of the attendant things required to "learn the

material," end up having the freedom to realize their potential and to avail themselves of so many of life's opportunities, potential they would not realize and opportunities they would not have had they not freed themselves from the negative behaviors that stem from a lack of discipline.

The final aspect of the school, and classroom, culture that merits exploration is support. Many people understandably have an impression of the military as a harsh, dogmatic organization that brooks no dissent and focuses solely on ensuring that its members do what they are told, when they are told, and the way in which they are told. Elements of the military are indeed reflective of these characterizations, but, first of all, there exist deep-seated reasons why the military has to have these kinds of attributes; foremost among them is that the military involves the giving and taking of life, in the harshest conditions imaginable. Second, and conversely, the military also has a very nurturing, supportive element, and it is this part of the military culture that also plays a key role in the culture of USMAPS and its classrooms.

Much is expected of Soldier and their leaders, but much is given to them as well. This relationship exists everywhere in the military, from a team leader's demand that his Soldiers meet him at 0300 to conduct extra training, to that same team leader's daily visits to the hospital to check on and encourage one of those same Soldiers, all the way to this nation's demand that its Soldiers leave their families and jobs, in the case of the National Guard and Reserves, to engage an enemy on the other side of the world, at what may very well be the cost of those Soldiers' lives, to those same Soldiers' receiving good pay, steady employment, great health care, and the respect and admiration of the nation that puts them in harm's way.

At USMAPS, the same kind of great demands but wonderful support exists. Cadet Candidates must wear a uniform, get weekly haircuts, begin their days very early and end them very late, and juggle stringent requirements in the academic, physical, military, and moral realms. However, they in turn receive a wonderful, year-long education and

developmental experience valued at more than $50,000. Their tuition, room, board, and books are provided to them free of charge, and they also receive a monthly salary of several hundred dollars that helps them defray all kinds of non-school expenses. Additionally, while their Tactical Officers and Noncommissioned Officers place great demands upon them, they also do everything within their considerable power to guide and assist them, to include, for example, driving to JFK Airport with no advanced notice to pick up stranded students and then keep those students in their home over the weekend because those students' plans fell through at the last minutes. In the classroom, USMAPS students face high expectations and strict demands with respect to the material they must master and the responsibility they must show while mastering it, but their instructors are extremely supportive during that entire endeavor. Whether it be meeting with each student every time a paper is due to ensure that adequate progress is being made; providing every student with ample, timely feedback on essays and examinations; being here from 7PM to 9PM on weekday nights to conduct extra instruction; or meeting with a student at 0600 on a weekday or 9PM on the weekend to discuss that student's personal problems, USMAPS instructors provide their students with exceptional support. In turn, USMAPS students go the extra mile in terms of their attitude and effort, and they report time and again that it was the incredible support they received from their instructors and tactical officers that motivated them to try their best and realize their potential.

This fourth theme—how this research project's insights can inform the very broad discussion of the importance of school and classroom culture—is a critically important aspect of this study. Much has been written, and debated, about the impact of culture on student performance, but this discussion of the school and classroom culture at USMAPS has hopefully offered thoughts that will be of use in what will certainly be an ongoing discussion. USMAPS is in many ways a unique institution, for obvious reasons which have been highlighted in detail in this study, but it is also fundamentally an institution that is preparing young men and women for the transition to the next stage of their lives,

and it shares that purpose, and many others, with a wide range of institutions. All of these institutions, USMAPS included, must grapple with the best way to meet the challenges of inspiring their students to achieve and then providing those students with the resources necessary for that achievement, and culture plays a large role in that inspiration. The USMAPS school and classroom culture has its unique aspects, but fundamentally it also has the things it shares with many, many other schools—standards, expectations, discipline, and support—and it is these shared components that offer promise for continued dialogue among a wide variety of institutions.

Theme Five

The fifth, and final, theme of this study is transferability. As was the case with the key terms of each of this study's first four themes, it is important to set the stage for the upcoming discussion by defining the term in question. Transferability is not as broad in scope or complex in nature as the key terms in the previous four themes, but it is nonetheless important to establish what this theme means when it uses this term. Essentially, transferability is the quality of being applicable to a different situation. If an entity is not applicable to a certain set of circumstances, organization, or group, then that entity is not transferable to those other entities.

In the case of this study, there are three elements that speak against the transferability of this study's lessons to institutions beyond USMAPS. The first of these elements is the general caution that is always in effect when the attempt is made to transfer findings from one situation to another. Whether the situation be a physics experiment that applies to literally the universe or a survey to be used in only a single classroom, the researcher always faces the challenge of transferring the results of that experiment to anything beyond the experiment that produced the results in question. As discussed in detail earlier in this study, the nature of causality and correlation is a

complex, much debated topic, but it is one with which all researchers must grapple, which was certainly the case with the researcher writing this study.

The second element of concern regarding the transferability of this study's findings stems from the almost unique nature of USMAPS. This concern has been addressed at the end of each theme, but it merits mention again, in this part of this chapter, because of its fundamental importance to this study's transferability. USMAPS is indeed unique in many aspects, but as has been discussed and as will shortly be discussed again, those differences are more than counterbalanced by similarities, and those differences may, ironically enough, be the source of much discovery on the part of institutions that are very different from USMAPS by prompting them to ask whether they "should" be more like USMAPS; conversely, conversations between USMAPS and schools that differ greatly from it may prompt USMAPS to ask the same question: should it be more like these other schools? The third topic that raises concern about the transferability of this study is a sort of sub-set of the second concern, but it is important enough to warrant consideration here in its own right. This concern is the very well-resourced nature of USMAPS, a part of its existence that is not shared with many, arguably most, of the schools to which it might be able to offer thoughts and lessons. USAMPS has only approximately two-hundred forty students in a campus that cost more than $100 million to construct. The physical facility of USMAPS is world-class, and its students want for nothing, as should be abundantly clear at this point in this study. Additionally, these students not only have access to a wonderful "school," they also live at USMAPS in very nice, very clean rooms and are fed ample, nutritious, tasty food three times a day. While most schools are thankfully not of the kind described in *Savage Inequalities*, most schools are also not nearly as well resourced as USMAPS, and that difference raises understandable concerns regarding the transferability of the lessons of this study.

Despite these three reasonable misgivings about this study's transferability, I believe that this study has much to offer beyond the confines of USMAPS or USMA.

Regarding the causality conundrum, every researcher must deal with its challenges, and this study deals with that challenge by not positing causal relationships in the first place. This study does not argue that a single one of its findings "will" lead to any given result. Instead, it offers the reader a carefully detailed examination of a problem to be explored—the efficacy of the USMAPS English program—and a set of findings, conclusions, and recommendations stemming from a concerted, clearly explained effort to gather qualitative and quantitative data that led to those findings. It then analyzes those findings, the result of which is a series of observations that are arguably—but not definitively—applicable to any school engaged in an effort to raise its students' level of achievement in order to help those students gain entrance to and succeed in the next higher level of educational institution. This analysis of the transferability is not intended to undersell the transferability of this study; on the contrary, this study has much that could be of great use to a great number of schools, for all of the reasons heretofore discussed. It is simply to say that this study makes no claims about the definitive transferability of its findings; the assessment of the applicability of these findings is ultimately in the hands of the leadership of that school, and hopefully those leaders will find something of use in this study.

With respect to the almost unique nature of this school, to include its high level of resourcing, this study has addressed those concerns throughout its discussion of its four themes. Fundamentally, USMAPS is indeed a very different sort of school than most schools in America, but just as fundamentally, USMAPS and almost all schools in America share commonalities that enable the lessons of this study about the USMAPS English program to be a source of fruitful thought and experimentation for those schools. When the unique aspects of USMAPS are stripped away, what remains is an institution with a clear mission but one that is under constant pressure to justify that mission; a focused, passionate faculty but a faculty that, like any other faculty, must wrestle with personality conflicts, differences in approaches to student learning, and turnover; and a

motivated, appreciative student body but one that constantly struggles to meet the demands of its demanding institution, that is beset with self-doubt in many of its members, and that certainly has its share of family and home-life problems. Thus, when one considers USMAPS as a whole, one can hopefully concur that at least portions of what was observed about the USMAPS English program as a result of this study are transferable to other schools because of underlying, fundamentally important similarities between USMAPS and many other schools.

Key Lessons

Below is a listing of this study's most important lessons. All of these points have been discussed in great detail throughout this study, so they will not be accompanied with further explanation. However, having them in one, consolidated form will enable the reader to see at a glance the foundation of this study and contemplate how the elements of that foundation work together to form the essence of this research project.

1. For a research project examining the efficacy of an academic program—a program assessment—basing that study on quantitative as well as qualitative data is very helpful because doing so broadens the scope of the study and enables the researcher to look at the problem from multiple perspectives, some of which are mutually reinforcing but some of which are contradictory, a situation that promotes objective, candid research. In other words, faculty and student perceptions of the efficacy of a program are an integral part of assessing that program's effectiveness, but they are not sufficient; those perceptions should be matched with corresponding quantitative analysis of student performance in order to attempt to mesh perception with the reality of performance

2. It is very helpful to conduct a study that has the support of the institution being studied because this kind of support makes it much easier for the researcher to access data held at the institutional level.
3. Curricula reform based on carefully grounded analysis—quantitative and qualitative—in the context of open but guided discussion amongst experienced faculty has strong prospects of improving student outcomes.
4. Standardized tests are and almost certainly will remain controversial, but they can be an extraordinarily useful aspect of some program assessments; however, these tests must be placed into context, as evidenced by the SAT verbal scores vs. CEER scores analysis of this study.
5. Data of all sorts are fundamental to almost any research project, and institutions must carefully record and safeguard data relevant to future research, a task that is often understandably overlooked in the crush of day-to-day requirements.
6. It is vital to ask the hard questions and to be prepared for answers that the researcher may not like; this mindset affords the researcher the opportunity to explore unanticipated avenues—such as was the case in the "just above/just below" part of this study—and, most importantly, leads the researcher to pursue the truth, not a desired outcome.

Several of the points above may seem to be "common knowledge," but they are offered at the end of this study in the spirit of sharing with the reader important lessons from this particular study, not any other study. If these lessons apply to other studies, as many of them clearly do, so much the better; however, the key point with respect to these six points is that they clearly manifested themselves in this particular study.

Conclusion

Education is a noble undertaking. Those who make it their lives' work are focused on playing their part in an endeavor that makes an enormous, positive impact on countless people, child and adult alike. I began my journey of adulthood as an Army officer and will end it as an educator, so I have been doubly blessed to be able to serve my country via its defense and the education of its youth. Many of my former students have gone on to far greater heights than I have achieved or will ever achieve, and one of my fondest hopes is that I played a small part in their success as a result of being fortunate enough to be their teacher. This research project has been an amazing part of my journey as an adult and educator; it has given me far more than I have given it. Another fond hope I have is that this study will make some small, positive impact on what Mike Rose calls the "important work of remediation," whether that work involves students undergoing a journey similar to the one of USMAPS students or a very different one. Whatever the nature of that journey, students will always need and benefit from the assistance of those trying to help them raise their level of achievement, and this study has hopefully shed some light on how that help might be usefully proffered.

The title of this study deserves an answer at this stage, and that answer is contained within the question that opened this concluding chapter—What is to be done? The answer to that question may seem complicated, but it is actually one of the few straightforward, simple aspects of this study: Keep up the fight to help those students who most need that help. Finally, this study's answer to the question in its title should now be clear—USMAPS English is indeed a pathway to success, not a needless detour.

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Appendix A

March 2012 Initial Thoughts on the USMAPS English Curriculum

4 March 2012

Thoughts about the Curriculum

1. As we begin to consider how we might change our English curriculum for the upcoming academic year, I offer these thoughts as part of that process. Before I provide even the outline of my thoughts, though, I want to say that I couldn't be more impressed with USMAPS and with you, my colleagues. All of you have the best interests of our students at heart, and all of you work diligently to accomplish our mission of preparing our students for West Point. I have been at USMAPS for not quite two academic years, but it is obvious to me by this point that you and your predecessors have done great work in getting Cadet Candidates "ready to write" (and read and speak) at West Point.
2. I spent my entire time in the Dept. of English at West Point teaching four sections of core courses—a mixture of EN101, Freshman Composition; EN302, Advanced Composition; and PY201, Philosophy—every semester, so I'm well acquainted with the expectations and challenges of the writing program at USMA. Having said that, I offer these thoughts simply as suggestions and as part of a starting point for discussion, knowing that they are simply part of the mosaic that we'll put together over the next few months. As you'll see, these thoughts ultimately advocate fairly significant modifications to the way we do business, but they do so in the context of knowing that many of you have already voiced similar, and better, thoughts.
3. Fundamentally, I believe we need to do three things with our curriculum: teach fewer topics but teach them more comprehensively; integrate reading in a much more robust way; and focus earlier and more often on argumentative essays. As an end-state, our students should complete our curriculum with a knowledge of basic grammar and usage that is so ingrained in them that they have mastery of what we deem to be the key aspects of grammar & usage instead of familiarity with a broad variety of such topics; be well acquainted with reading and responding to a wide variety of sophisticated readings; and be able to write an out-of-class and in-class argumentative essay that is well organized, has a strong thesis, uses strong, smoothly integrated quotations, and contains perceptive analysis, all while following the conventions of standard English and documentation.
4. Regarding grammar and usage, my experience with the Cadets I taught and the now almost two years' worth of Cadet Candidates I've taught has convinced me that the only way to ensure that at least most, if not all, students truly learn these

topics is to focus on a relatively few of them and then to teach them in great depth by explaining them in almost painful detail, testing the students on the material after they first learn it, testing them on it throughout the year so that they realize that learning grammar is not a series of "fire and forget" missions, and relentlessly noting on any written products (to include emails) problems with any of the topics for which we've made them responsible. The preceding sentence may make it seem as if I'm advocating a sort of instruction that will make the students hate grammar, but the feedback I've gotten over the years about this topic has led me to the opposite conclusion: most of my students have said that they were glad that someone explained key topics of grammar to them in detail, held them accountable for learning the material, and reinforced the subject matter on a constant basis. As a starting point, I believe that we should focus on (and perhaps restrict ourselves to) the following topics: agreement, both subject/verb and pronoun/antecedent; passive voice; possession; commas, specifically after introductory elements, with coordinating conjunctions, in items in a series, and with essential/nonessential elements and absolute phrases; semicolons; and comma splices. Additionally, there are a number of specific usage considerations—e.g., beginning sentences with coordinating conjunctions or ending them with prepositions; using 2nd person; using the word "this" with an accompanying referent; etc.—that our students need to be aware of and need to be able to make conscious decisions about whether to use in their writing. To help our students master the aforementioned concepts, we could focus our efforts on them in the first quarter by spending several lessons on each concept and then assessing how well our students have mastered each concept—e.g., by giving a small quiz after each main topic such as passive voice, commas, etc. and then using the 1st quarter final exam to address all of these topics—and then including test questions on these topics on tests during the following three quarters, not to mention telling our students that our tolerance for mistakes in their writing involving these concepts will steadily diminish over the course of the school year.

5. Concerning reading, our students would greatly benefit by reading at least one piece of good writing each week, beginning with Week One. The genre isn't particularly important—a mixture of short stories, poems, fiction, nonfiction, essays, articles, excerpts, etc. would suffice—but what is important is that they essentially be constantly reading "something worthwhile" from the beginning of the academic year until the end. After they've finished reading the selection, we would discuss it with them in class and have them respond to it in a variety of ways: class discussion, journal writing, pop quizzes, group briefings, etc. I happened to see LTC Pete Molin, the Course Director for EN101 and a longtime friend and colleague, in the MWR gym a couple of weeks ago, and he reiterated (in casual conversation) that he's tried to streamline EN101 so that it focuses on

two things: writing argumentative essays well, and being able to comprehend sophisticated writing. Implementing the program outlined in this paragraph would hopefully go a long way toward reaching the latter of his two goals.

6. There are many fairly discrete steps involved in writing a smooth, persuasive argumentative essay, which is a very good reason for having our students begin this process relatively early in the academic year. Writing narrative, descriptive, and expository essays is an important element of almost any writing program and certainly deserves our attention from the beginning of the school year, but our students probably need to write a total of at least five or six argumentative essays—perhaps beginning as soon as early in the 2nd quarter—if they are to master steps such as using the "funnel method" in their introduction so that they hook their reader, set the stage for their essay, and lead into a strong thesis; developing a strong thesis statement, a skill to which I have devoted entire lessons, with noteworthy effect; writing body paragraphs that begin with topic sentences that are assertions related to the thesis, present compelling evidence in quotations that are smoothly integrated into the paper (no stranded quotations, etc.), and formulate insightful analysis that ultimately explains the meaning of the evidence and shows how this portion of the essay fits into the overall argument the paper is making; and writing strong conclusions that do not introduce new arguments but that do wrap up their argument in an interesting, thought-provoking way—I always tell my students to use their conclusions to "reiterate, not regurgitate" their main points.
7. As a final "body paragraph," I'll address a catch-all of observations I've made and thoughts I've had since beginning teaching here in September 2010. I've found my students to be eager to learn but glad to know that what they're learning will have applicability at West Point and as an officer. Most of them seem to enjoy a classroom in which they are challenged to stay engaged with the material. The great majority of my students last year and the ones from this year told me they benefitted greatly from having to write and submit outlines for their essays and from doing revisions to their essays (in my case, they have to incorporate all of my feedback—especially concerning correctness and usage—into a revised essay and highlight in bold text all revisions, as well as write what I call a "Comments to Comments" paragraph in which they summarize my feedback and their reaction to that feedback). I believe our students would greatly benefit from seeing examples of responses the faculty have written to essay prompts, etc., and I think that scheduling entire lessons for conferences—both before and after the paper is due, to help prepare the paper and then to provide feedback on it, respectively—would be a great use of our time. We may want to incorporate both drafts and revisions of submitted essays into the grading process—perhaps assign 25% of a grade to the draft, 50% to the submission, and 25% to the revision, for

example—as a way to make students buy into the writing process. We should also consider giving our students an "entrance exam" consisting of a two-hour, in-class argumentative essay based on reading a sophisticated piece of writing and responding to it and then giving essentially the same kind of exam as our "final exam." This technique would enable us to easily gauge the progress that each one of our students has made during his or her year at USMAPS as well as determine each student's readiness for the West Point writing program; this topic has been addressed before, but it may be time to resurrect the issue of a two or three week intensive summer school in English for those students who haven't demonstrated that they can handle the final exam. Finally, we should consider doing anonymous, "group grading" of perhaps a mid-term out-of-class essay and then a final exam in-class essay so that we could as objectively as possible determine the level of writing our students are demonstrating at those key junctures in the course; as part of this process, we could have a calibration meeting prior to each of these exams in which we discuss our reactions to a variety of student essays from that exam after evaluating each essay individually. This calibration meeting would occur just before we began our group grading.

8. Implementing all or even most of the ideas outlined in this document would probably require revising our curriculum to a considerable extent. However, I believe the results would be worth the effort. Our current curriculum has helped a great number of students a great deal; a revised curriculum containing many of the concepts and procedures in these paragraphs—along with the great ideas that are sure to come from you and from our discussions of all of our ideas—has the potential to provide even more help to an even larger number of students. We may even find that we do not want to have remedial and honors sections, but I leave that discussion for another time and place. Thank you very much for your attention to these thoughts, and I look forward to our 8 March curriculum development meeting, and all subsequent meetings on this topic.

Appendix B

USMAPS Essay Guidelines (UEG)

USMAPS ESSAY GUIDELINES

Background: Writing is inherently an act of creation. As such, writing stems from the imagination and creativity of the author, which in turn ultimately depend upon the freedom that all writers must have in order to develop and express their thoughts. Having said that, however, writing is also based upon a number of principles—ranging from overarching ones to very narrowly focused ones—and argumentative writing is no exception. The vast majority of the writing you will do as a West Point cadet and then as a commissioned officer will be argumentative in nature, which is why the writing program at USMAPS focuses on this mode of discourse. Thus, the guidelines you will learn at USMAPS will serve you well not only at USMAPS but also at West Point and in the Army, as well as in whatever career you choose when your service to the nation as a commissioned officer is complete.

Purpose: The guidelines contained herein are designed to provide you with a framework which will greatly facilitate your writing, whether it be description, narration, exposition, or argumentation. This framework is not intended to stifle your creativity or to make writing a "checklist" process. Rather, its intent is to provide you with principles, as well as a number of specifics, that will enable you to focus your thoughts on the substantive aspects of your writing because you will not need to expend time or energy wondering about the topics addressed in these guidelines.

Your Responsibility: You must study these guidelines so well that the material they contain becomes second-nature to you. You need to read these guidelines many times prior to the end of the academic year. Additionally, before you submit each writing assignment, you must thoroughly check it prior to submission, in order to ensure that it adheres to these guidelines.

Your Instructor's Responsibility: While what you learn at USMAPS is ultimately your responsibility, your English instructor will ensure that you have ample opportunity to master all of the subject matter of these guidelines. She or he will provide that opportunity by devoting sufficient class time to these topics; explaining them clearly and as often as necessary; evaluating your writing in accordance with them; and reviewing them with you, whether collectively (in class) or individually (in AI).

The Guidelines: The following paragraphs contain the individual guidelines previously referenced, each of which you must understand and incorporate into your writing. The guidelines are grouped according to whether they apply to substance, organization, style, or correctness. To save space, the guidelines are written in an abbreviated fashion, i.e., they are sometimes not written as sentences.

SUBSTANCE:

- The most important—and difficult—part of any argumentative essay
- Thesis: the most important part of the substance
- Thesis must contain the essence of the argument; every strong thesis is essentially an assertion with which it is possible to meaningfully disagree

- One of the biggest challenges in composing a thesis is to make it as comprehensive as necessary but as succinct as possible.

STYLE:

- "How" to say what you say is perhaps the most fluid of the major elements of an essay. In essence, though, your style needs to demonstrate maturity and sophistication by a combination of appropriate word choice and sentence structure.

ORGANIZATION:

- During the pre-writing process, always use some kind of technique to organize the essay so that it addresses all relevant points in a logical manner; outlines work well, but some authors prefer other techniques.
- All argumentative essays have a beginning, middle, and end (introduction, body, and conclusion)
- Introductions often open with an attention-getter, set the stage by addressing key aspects of the topic at hand, and end with the thesis ("funnel method"); moving from general to specific in the introduction works well, but do not begin the essay with a gross generalization such as ("Throughout history, ….").
- Body paragraphs normally begin with a topic sentence, which is itself a "mini-thesis": an assertion that develops some aspect of the thesis; next comes evidence from the text, in the form of summarized, paraphrased, or quoted passages; every piece of evidence must be documented, and the quoted passages must be part of a sentence so that they are not stranded [e.g., In his opening sentence, Smith's claim that "America is inexorably on the way to war…." (3) is completely unfounded.]. In order to explain the meaning of your evidence, you must provide analysis that clearly explains that evidence. In the example above, you would write several sentences that explain why you believe Smith's claim is unfounded.
- A key paragraph in many argumentative essays is the counterargument, which begins by stating the opponent's position and the rationale for that position and then rebuts that position by reiterating/developing relevant aspects of your argument
- Conclusions "reiterate but do not regurgitate" the key elements of your argument. That is, they address the key elements of your paper but do so in a way that does not simply re-state what you have already stated.

CORRECTNESS:

- Grammar is essentially all of the rules regarding how to construct any language. A critically important subset of these rules is correctness, which itself involves

many topics. For your writing, the elements of correctness you must master are commas, comma splices, fragments, fused sentences, semicolons, and passive voice.

- Phrase: A group of words
- Clause: Independent—a group of words with a subject and verb that expresses a complete thought; Dependent—a group of words with a subject and verb that does not express a complete thought; the former can act as a sentence—the latter cannot
- Commas: most common source of correctness error; must know how to use after introductory elements (especially subordinate clauses and prepositional phrases) and when combining independent clauses with coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS)
- Comma splices: two independent clauses joined only by a comma; correct by using a semicolon, period, or coordinating conjunction and comma
- Fragment: a group of words masquerading as a sentence because it is missing some combination of a verb, subject, or complete thought
- Fused sentence: independent clauses joined with no punctuation or connecting words
- Semicolon: primarily used to separate—by itself—independent clauses; secondary use of separating elements in a complex series
- Passive voice: writing that does not explicitly provide a "doer" of every verb in the sentence—indicated by a form of the verb "to be" and a past participle; active voice is normally preferable because it is more concise and clearly states who or what is doing the action of every verb—each verb must be preceded by a "doer" (He was given the award vs. He was given the award by his tactical officer vs. The tactical officer gave him the award)
- Ensure that pronouns agree with their antecedents (e.g., "Each CC should see his or her TAC officer."

Tips: Following is a series of key "tips" dealing with common usage errors and a variety of other related matters. Review this portion of the Essay Guidelines **prior to submitting every** out-of-class essay.

- Do not use 2nd person (you or your)
- Use 1st person (I, we, our) sparingly
- Use third person (she/he, they, their) always or almost always
- Write primarily in active voice; use passive voice sparingly and intentionally
- Always follow the word "this" by a referent (e.g., "this idea," "this person," etc.)
- "i.e." means "that is"; "e.g." means "for example
- Never strand a quotation (quotations always need your words—usually in the form of an introductory comment—to form a sentence)

- Commas and periods go inside quotation marks; semicolons go outside
- Titles of stand-alone entities such as books and movies are italicized or underlined
- Titles of dependent entities such as chapters; poems (except for stand-alone ones such as *Beowulf*, *Gilgamesh*, or *The Iliad*); or anthology entries are in quotation marks
- ALWAYS document, whether when paraphrasing or quoting
- Ensure that your introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion follow the guidelines in this hand-out
- Check your paper carefully for errors regarding commas, comma splices, fragments, fused sentences, semicolons, and passive voice
- There is normally no need to use parentheses in your essays
- Do not use contractions ("don't") in formal writing
- "They" and "Their" are plural pronouns but are constantly incorrectly used (e.g., "Everyone has their opinion about politics")

Appendix C

USMA English and USMAPS English Syllabi

Overview: The syllabi in this appendix are the USMA EN 101 and USMAPS English syllabi for academic years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. These two academic years are the years during which the impact of the revised USMAPS English curriculum, as manifested in the syllabi in this document, was examined. As discussed in detail in the body of the dissertation, the purpose of this part of this research project was to attempt to determine if the changes made in the USMAPS English curriculum, as reflected in its syllabi, had any measurable impact on the EN 101 performance of those students who studied English via those revised syllabi. A measurable difference in these students' performance was found as a result of this examination, and the documents that plausibly could have been the impetus for this increase in performance are below.

USMAPS English AY '12-'13 Quarters One-Four Syllabi:

U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY PREPARATORY SCHOOL
EN21S FIRST QUARTER STANDARD SYLLABUS

DAYS 1 & 2

20 August 2012 – 15 October 2012

First Quarter Required Texts:

Worksheets Booklet (WB); Little Brown Handbook 11th Ed. (LBH); Developing Critical Reading Skills, 9th Ed. (DCRS); McGraw-Hill Reader, 11th Ed. (MHR); Documentation of Academic Work (DAW); Academic Standard Operating Procedures (SOP); Gruber's Complete SAT Guide 2013 (SAT).

All students are expected to bring all texts to class unless specifically directed otherwise by the instructor. Assignments are due on the day they are listed. Laptops will not be opened in English class without teacher's permission.

Homework Assignments:

Instructors may alter class and homework assignments to suit the needs and the abilities of the students and to meet the in-class time constraints that the quantity and the difficulty of the materials impose on both teachers and students. These alterations may include the reduction of materials and the full or partial alteration of assignments from one day to another so long as the essentials are covered by the last day of instruction prior to quarter midterm and final examinations.

Two-Hour Day "1" Classes:

Attendance is mandatory. Writing activities will include, but are not limited to, the following: writing journals, drafts or final copies of assigned compositions; performing peer evaluations of drafts or final copies of assigned compositions; sharing possible topics with peers and/or instructor; discussing the conventions of standard written English (grammar, rhetoric, and usage.

DATE	GRAMMAR/SAT	DCRS/MHR	WRITING
Mon (1) 20 Aug	Complete history card.		Discuss First Quarter Syllabus; discuss Academic SOP; receive and discuss HWE1 assignment; write Journal 1, "Course Expectations," in class.
Tues (2) 21 Aug		*DCRS*: Discuss "To the Student," pp. xvii-xix, and "Introduction," pp. 1-8, in class *MHR*: Mortimer J. Adler, "How to Mark a Book," pp. 13-16.	Teacher option: Write Journal 2, Pre-Writing for HWE1, in class/complete Day 1 administrative requirements.
Wed (1) 22 Aug		*MHR*: E.B. White, "Once More to the Lake," pp. 298-303.	Take Basic Writing Skills Exam (BWSE) in class. **HWE1 draft due (30 points)**
Thur (2) 23 Aug		*MHR*: Langston Hughes, "Salvation," pp. 642-643.	Paper Conferences/Workshopping
Fri (1) 24 Aug	Parts of Speech: Read *LBH*, pp. 230-241; do Ex 12.2, p. 235 and Ex. 12.6, p. 241; do Parts of Speech Worksheet, WB, pp. 3.	*MHR*: Discuss "Once More to the Lake" and "Salvation."	Complete Paper Conferences during free periods/AI.
Mon (2) 27 Aug		*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete Chapter 1, "Building a Foundation: Vocabulary, Annotating, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing," pp. 10-44.	
Tues (1) 28 Aug	Verbs: Read *LBH*, pp. 272-278; do Exs. 14.1 & 14.2.	*LBH*: Read 6c "Reading for Comprehension," pp. 131-135; *DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete pp. 45-58 in Chapter 2.	Write Practice Summary in class.
Wed (2) 29 Aug	Verbals and Verbal Phrases: Read *LBH*, pp. 245-248; do Ex. 12.11 and 12.12; WB: do "Verbals Use Worksheet," p. 6.		**HWE1 due (100 points)** **HWE2 Assigned**
Thur (1) 30 Aug	Verbs (cont.): Read *LBH*, pp. 290-295.	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete pp. 58-79 in Chapter 2. *MHR*: Read "An American Childhood," pp. 312-317.	Write Summary 1 in class.
Fri (2) 31 Aug **½ Day**	Grammar Quiz 1: Parts of Speech and Verbals	*MHR*: Read "Superman and Me," pp. 580-583.	**HWE2 draft due (30 points)**
01-03 SEP	**LABOR DAY WEEKEND- NO CLASSES**		

DATE	GRAMMAR/SAT	DCRS/MHR	WRITING
Tues (1) 4 Sep	Subject-Verb Agreement: *LBH*: study pp. 301-308; do Ex. 15.1, p. 308; WB: do S-V Agr Worksheet I, pp. 10-11.	Discuss *MHR* readings.	Begin Paper Conferences during free periods/AI.
Wed (2) 5 Sep			Paper Conferences/Workshopping
Thur (1) 6 Sep	Grammar Quiz 2: Subject-Verb Agreement	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete pp. 120-132 in Chapter	

	SAT: Do Section 4 of SAT Practice Test 1, pp. 573-577, in class and discuss.	4.	
Fri (2) 7 Sep		*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete pp. 132-160 in Chapter 4.	**HWE2 due (100 points)**
Mon (1) 10 Sep	Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement: *LBH*: study Ch. 15b, pp. 309-313; do ex. 15.2, pp. 313-314; ex. 15.3, p. 314; and ex. 15.4, pp. 314-315.		Write Summary 2 in class.
Tue (2) 11 Sep	Grammar Quiz 3: Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement	*MHR***:** Read "My Creature from the Black Lagoon," pp. 525-532.	
Wed (1) 12 Sep	*SAT*: Do Section 5 of SAT Practice Test 1, pp. 578-582, in class and discuss.		**ICE 1**
Thur (2) 13 Sep	Exam Review Day WB: do Review Worksheet, p. 15; do Sentence Usage Exs. I-II, pp. 22-23; do S-V Agr Worksheet II, p. 12.		
Fri 14 Sep	**MID-QUARTER ENGLISH EXAM 0800; MATH EXAM 1300**		
Mon 17 Sep	**GRADING DAY**		
Tue 18 Sep	**RESCHEDULING DAY**		

DATE	GRAMMAR/LBH/SAT	DCRS/MHR/READING	WRITING
Wed (1) 19 Sep	Pronoun Case: *LBH*: study Ch. 13, pp. 264-272; do ex. 13.1, p. 267 and ex. 13.5 pp 271-272. WB: do Pronoun Case Worksheet, p. 14.	*MHR*: Read "Once Upon a Quinceañera," pp. 328-332.	**HWE3 Assigned**
Thur (2) 20 Sep	Pronoun Reference: *LBH*: study Ch. 19 a-f, pp. 345-351; do ex. 19.1 pp. 348 and 19.2 p. 351.		
Fri (1) 21 Sep	Grammar Quiz 4: Pronoun Case and Reference	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete Chapter 3, pp 80-118.	Practice Critical Reading Exercise **HWE3 draft due (30 pts)**
Mon (2) 24 Sep	*LBH*: Read "Forming a Critical Perspective," pp. 138-152.		Paper Conferences/Workshopping
Tues (1) 25 Sep	Recognizing Phrases, Clauses, and Sentence Types: *LBH*: read pp. 249-264. Do Exs. 12.15, 12.16, 12.17, and 12.21.		CRE I
Wed (2) 26 Sep	Sentence Fragments: *LBH*: read pp. 330-337. Do Exs. 17.1 through 17.3.	*MHR*: Read "Love, Internet Style" pp. 318-321.	
Thur (1)	Comma Splices and Fused		Paper Workshopping

27 Sep	Sentences: *LBH*: read pp. 338-345. Do Exs. 18.1 through 18.4.		
Fri (2) 28 Sep	Grammar Quiz 5: Phrases, Clauses, and Sentence Types *SAT*: Do Section 7 of SAT Practice Test 1, pp. 588-593, in class and discuss.		**HWE3 due (100 pts)**
Mon (1) 1 Oct	The Comma: *LBH*: read pp. 422-433. Do Exs. 28.1 through 28.7.	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete Chapter 5, pp. 161-187.	
Tues (2) 2 Oct	The Comma (cont.): *LBH*: read pp. 433-443. Do Exs. 28.8 through 28.13. *LBH*: read pp. 470-471.		

DATE	GRAMMAR/SAT	DCRS/MHR	WRITING
Wed (1) 3 Oct		*MHR*: Read "Sex Ed," pp. 275-277.	**ICE 2**
Thur (2) 4 Oct	*LBH*: Read pp. 460-461. WB: Do Practice Editing Exercise I, p. 28.		CRE II
Fri (1) 5 Oct ½ DAY	The Semicolon: *LBH*: read pp. 443-451. Do Exs. 29.1 through 29.6. WB: Review Practice Editing Exercise I.		
8 Oct	**COLUMBUS DAY- NO CLASSES**		
Tues (2) 09 Oct	Exam Review Day WB: do Practice Editing Exs. II-III, pp. 29-30. WB: do Sentence Usage Exs. III-IV, pp. 24-25.		
Wed 10 Oct	**ENGLISH FINAL EXAM**		
Thur 11 Oct	**MATH FINAL EXAM**		
Fri 12 Oct	**GRADING DAY**		
Mon 15 Oct	**EXAM CRITIQUE DAY**		

1st Quarter Standard Grade Breakdown

HWE1	150 pts	Quizzes	50 pts
HWE2	150 pts	ICE1	50 pts
HWE3	150 pts	Mid-Quarter Exam	100 pts
Summary I	25 pts	ICE2	50 pts
Summary II	25 pts	Final Exam	100 pts
CRE I	25 pts	Instructor Points	100 pts
CRE II	25 pts	**TOTAL**	**1,000 pts**

U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY PREPARATORY SCHOOL
EN22S SECOND QUARTER STANDARD [redacted]

[redacted]

16 October 2012 – 18 December 2012

Second Quarter Required Texts:

Worksheets Booklet (WB); Little Brown Handbook 11th Ed. (LBH); Developing Critical Reading Skills, 9th Ed. (DCRS); McGraw-Hill Reader, 11th Ed. (MHR); Documentation of Academic Work (DAW); Academic Standard Operating Procedures (SOP); Gruber's Complete SAT Guide 2013 (SAT).

All students are expected to bring all texts to class unless specifically directed otherwise by the instructor. Assignments are due on the day they are listed. Laptops will not be opened in English class without teacher's permission.

Homework Assignments:

Instructors may alter class and homework assignments to suit the needs and the abilities of the students and to meet the in-class time constraints that the quantity and the difficulty of the materials impose on both teachers and students. These alterations may include the reduction of materials and the full or partial alteration of assignments from one day to another so long as the essentials are covered by the last day of instruction prior to quarter midterm and final examinations.

Two-Hour Day "1" Classes:

Attendance is mandatory. Writing activities will include, but are not limited to, the following: writing journals, drafts or final copies of assigned compositions; performing peer evaluations of drafts or final copies of assigned compositions; sharing possible topics with peers and/or instructor; discussing the conventions of standard written English (grammar, rhetoric, and usage).

DATE	SAT/DICTION/QUIZZES	LBH/DCRS/MHR	CRITICAL READING/WRITING
Tues (1) 16 Oct	Distribute 2nd Quarter Syllabus and Discuss	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete all exercises for Ch. 8, pp. 302-330.	**Assign HWE4** USMAPS/Personal Argumentative Paper
Wed (2) 17 Oct		*LBH*: Read Section 42j in Chapter 42, pp. 586-588, and Section 43d-43e in Chapter 43, pp. 611-625.	
Thurs (1) 18 Oct ½ Day	Grammar Quiz 1: Review of 1st Qtr Grammar Do Section 9 and Section 10 of SAT Practice Test 1, pp. 599-604, in class and discuss.	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete all exercises for Ch. 8, pp. 331-352.	Instructor Option: HWE4 prewriting/topics.
19-22 Oct	**PARENTS' WEEKEND- NO CLASSES**		
Tues (2) 23 Oct		*LBH*: Read Chapter 45, pp.635-643. *MHR*: Read "Why I Hunt," pp. 742-745.	
Wed (1) 24 Oct	**LIBRARY ORIENTATION**	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete all exercises for Ch.9, pp. 353-364 (Types of Reasoning).	**HWE4 draft due (30 points)**

Thurs (2) 25 Oct		*MHR*: Read "Why the Rich are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer," pp. 485-497.	Paper Conferences
Fri (1) 26 Oct ½ Day	Quiz 2: Types of Reasoning (Deduction & Induction)	*LBH*: Study Chapter 46, pp. 644-690, and do Ex. 46.1, p. 688.	Workshopping/ Paper Conferences
Mon (2) 29 Oct	WB: Read pp. 39-41, word numbers 1-20, and do Diction Worksheet 1, pp. 52-53. Read pp. 41-43, word numbers 21-30, and do Diction Worksheet 2, pp. 54-55.	Discuss "Why the Rich are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer" in class.	Workshopping/ Paper Conferences
Tues (1) 30 Oct	WB: Do Active and Passive Voice Worksheet, p. 21. Do Section 4 of SAT Practice Test 2, pp. 670-675, in class and discuss.	*LBH*: Voice, Read pp. 298-300 Do Ex 14.11.	Paper Editing Workshop/Paper Conferences
Wed (2) 31 Oct	WB: Do Editing Exercise IV, p. 31.	*MHR*: Read "Mirror, Mirror on the Web," pp. 157-163.	

DATE	SAT/DICTION/QUIZZES	LBH/DCRS/MHR	CRITICAL READING/WRITING
Thur (1) 1 Nov	Do Section 5 of SAT Practice Test 2, pp. 676-680, in class and discuss.	*DCRS*: Chapter 9, Read, annotate, and complete all exercises, pp. 364-376, (Emotional Appeals).	
Fri (2) 2 Nov	WB: Do Sentence Ex. V, p. 26. Quiz 3: Emotional Appeals		**HWE4 Due**
Mon (1) 5 Nov	WB: Read pp. 43-44 and do Diction Worksheet 3, p. 56.		Do CRE III in class (DCRS required)
Tue (2) 6 Nov	WB: Do Editing Exercise V, p. 32-33.		Write Practice SAT Essay In Class
Wed (1) 7 Nov	Do Section 7 of SAT Practice Test 2, pp. 687-692, in class and discuss.	*MHR*: "The Allegory of the Cave," pp. 656-659. LBH: Read pp. 176-187.	**Assign HWE5** Journal Writing
Thur (2) 8 Nov	WB: Do Induction Worksheet and Deduction Worksheet, pp. 72-73. Quiz 4: Logic Overview (Induction, Deduction, and Emotional Appeals)		
Fri (1) 9 Nov		*LBH*: Complete "Exercise on Chapters 17-22," p. 376.	**ICE1**
12 Nov	**VETERANS'DAY HOLIDAY- NO CLASSES**		
Tue (2) 13 Nov	Review for Mid-Qtr Exam WB: Do Review Exercise I, pp. 62-63.		**HWE5 Prewriting/Essay Selection**
Wed	**Mid-Qtr Exams**		

14 Nov			
Thur 15 Nov	**Grading Day**		
Fri (1) 16 Nov	Do Section 9 and Section 10 of SAT Practice Test 2, pp. 698-703, in class and discuss.	*LBH*: Read Chapter 44, pp. 626-635. Do Ex. 44.1, pp. 631-632.	
DATE	**SAT/ DICTION/QUIZZES**	**LBH/DCRS/MHR**	**CRITICAL READING/WRITING**
Mon (2) 19 Nov		*MHR*: Read "The Culture of Disbelief," pp. 667-676.	**HWE5 draft due (30 pts)**
Tues (1) 20 Nov	WB: Read pp. 45-49 and do Diction Worksheet 4, pp. 57-58. Do Section 4 of SAT Practice Test 3, pp. 770-775.		Paper Conferences/Workshopping
21-23 Nov	**Thanksgiving Holiday- NO CLASSES**		
Mon (2) 26 Nov		*MHR*: Read "Politics and the English Language," pp. 106-116.	Paper Conferences/Workshopping
Tues (1) 27 Nov	WB: Read pp. 49-50 and do Diction Worksheet 5, pp. 59-60.	*DCRS*: Chapter 9, Read, annotate, and complete all exercises, pp. 376-406, (Logical Fallacies).	**Assign Speech**
Wed (2) 28 Nov	WB: Do Logical Fallacies Worksheet I (or instruction option), pp. 74-75 .	*LBH*: Read Chapter 56, pp. 856-864.	
Thur (1) 29 Nov	WB: Do Logical Fallacies Worksheet II (or instructor option), pp. 76-77.		Do CRE IV in class (DCRS required)
Fri (2) 30 Nov	WB: Do Editing Ex. VI, pp. 34-36 in class and discuss. Quiz 5: Logical Fallacies		**HWE5 due**
Mon (1) 3 Dec		*MHR*: Read "A Modest Proposal," pp. 498-504.	Begin Speeches
Tues (2) 4 Dec			Continue Speeches
Wed (1) 5 Dec			Continue Speeches Write Practice SAT Essay In Class
DATE	**SAT/ DICTION/QUIZZES**	**LBH/DCRS/MHR**	**CRITICAL READING/WRITING**
Thur (2) 6 Dec			Complete Speeches
Fri (1)	WB: Read pp. 50-51 and do Diction		Makeup Speeches (as required)

7 Dec	Worksheet 6, p. 61. Do Section 5 of SAT Practice Test 3, pp. 776-780, in class and discuss.		
Mon (2) 10 Dec		*LBH*: Do "Exercise on Chapters 13-16," pp. 327-328.	
Tues (1) 11 Dec	Vocabulary Review		**ICE2**
Wed (2) 12 Dec	Final Exam Review WB: Do Review Exercise II, p. 64.		
Thurs 13 Dec	**MATH FINAL EXAM**		
Fri 14 Dec	**ENGLISH FINAL EXAM**		
Mon 17 Dec	**GRADING DAY**		
Tues 18 Dec	**EXAM CRITIQUE**		

2nd Quarter Standard Grade Breakdown			
HWE4	150 pts	Mid-Quarter In-Class Essay	50 pts 100 pts
HWE5	150 pts	Mid-Quarter Exam	50 pts
CRE III	50 pts	Final In-Class Essay	100 pts
CRE IV	50 pts	Final Exam	100 pts
Quizzes	50 pts	Instructor Points	100 pts
Speech	50 pts	**TOTAL**	**1,000 pts**
GE 2	100 pts		

U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY PREPARATORY SCHOOL
EN23S THIRD QUARTER STANDARD SYLLABUS

DAYS 1 & 2

4 January 2013 – 4 March 2013

Third Quarter Required Texts:

Little Brown Handbook 11th Ed. (LBH); Developing Critical Reading Skills, 9th Ed. (DCRS); McGraw-Hill Reader, 11th Ed. (MHR); Documentation of Academic Work (DAW); Academic Standard Operating Procedures (SOP); Gruber's Complete SAT Guide 2013 (SAT); Backpack Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing (BL); Getting Ready for the SAT (GRSAT)

All students are expected to bring all texts to class unless specifically directed otherwise by the instructor. Assignments are due on the day they are listed. Laptops will not be opened in English class without the instructor's permission.

Homework Assignments:

Instructors may alter class and homework assignments to suit the needs and the abilities of the students and to meet the in-class time constraints that the quantity and the difficulty of the materials impose on both instructors and students. These alterations may include the reduction of materials and the full or partial alteration of assignments from one day to another so long as the essentials are covered by the last day of instruction prior to quarter midterm and final examinations.

Two-Hour Day "1" Classes:

Attendance is mandatory. Writing activities will include, but are not limited to, the following: writing journals, drafts or final copies of assigned compositions; performing peer evaluations of drafts or final copies of assigned compositions; sharing possible topics with peers and/or instructor; discussing the conventions of standard written English (grammar, rhetoric, and usage)

3rd Quarter Standard Grade Breakdown			
HWE5	200 points	Quizzes	100 points
HWE6	200 points	Midterm Exam	100 points
Annotated Bibliography	50 points	Final Exam	150 points
Speech	100 points	Instructor Points	100 points
		TOTAL	1,000 points

DATE	GRAMMAR/LBH/SAT	DCRS/MHR/BL	WRITING
Thur 3 Jan	**REORGANIZATION DAY**		
Fri (1) 4 Jan	Documentation: Review and discuss Chapter 44, *LBH*, pp. 626-635. Read Chapter 41, "Planning a Research Project," in *LBH*, pp. 548-557.		Discuss Third Quarter Syllabus; discuss Academic SOP; **receive and discuss HWE6 assignment**; write Journal, "Course Expectations," in class.
Mon (2) 7 Jan	Grammar Review: Read "Parts of Speech," "Clauses and Phrases," and "The Sentence and Its Parts" in *SAT*, pp. 453-464. *LBH*: Read pp. 340-343 (Comma Splices).	*MHR* Reading: pp. 19-21, "The Cult of Ethnicity" Or Instructor's Option	
Tue (1) 8 Jan	Grammar Review: Read "Verbs," "Nouns and Pronouns," "Subject-Verb Relationship," "Tense," "Verbals," and "Mood and Voice" in *SAT*, pp. 465-489. Do Section 7 of SAT Practice Test 3, pp. 786-791, in class and discuss.	Discussion of assigned article for HWE6.	Instructor Option: HWE6 prewriting/topics.
Wed (2) 9 Jan	Grammar Quiz		
Thur (1) 10 Jan	Do Section 5 of SAT Practice Test 3, pp. 776-780, in class and discuss. *LBH*: Read pp. 343-345 (Fused Sentences); Review Chapter 42, pp. 561-584.		Annotated Bibliography: Read pp. 557-560 and pp. 590-625 (Chapter 43) in the *LBH*.
Fri (2) 11 Jan	Grammar Review: Read "Adjective Modifiers," "Adverbial Modifiers," "Connectives," and "Correct Usage: Choosing the Right Word" in *SAT*, pp. 490-508. *LBH*: Read pp. 309-313 (Pronoun Antecedent).	*DCRS*: Read and annotate Chapter 6, pp. 190-208.	
Mon (1) 14 Jan	Do Sections 9 and 10 of SAT Practice Test 3, pp. 797-801, in class and discuss.	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete all exercises for Chapter 6, pp. 215-227.	Workshopping/ Paper Conferences Annotated Bibliography Due
Tue (2) 15 Jan	*LBH*: Read pp.301-308 (Subject/ Verb Agreement)	Quiz: *DCRS*, Chapter 6 *MHR* Reading: pp. 723-726, "The Globalization of Eating Disorders" Or Instructor's Option	Workshopping/ Paper Conferences
Wed (1) 16 Jan	*GRSAT*: Read pp. 1-10 and discuss. Do Section 3 in class and discuss.		Workshopping/Paper Conferences

	LBH: Read Chapter 43, pp. 589-611.		
Thur (2) 17 Jan	*LBH*: Review Chapter 47, pp. 691-725.		Workshopping/Paper Conferences

DATE	GRAMMAR/SAT	DCRS/MHR/BL	WRITING
Fri (1) 18 Jan	Grammar Quiz *GRSAT*: Do Section 5 in class and discuss. *LBH*: Read pp.298-301 (Passive Voice)		**HWE6 Draft Due** **Do SAT Practice Scored Essay in class**
MONDAY 21 JAN	**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY- NO CLASSES**		
Tue (2) 22 Jan	*GRSAT*: Do Section 7 in class and discuss. *LBH*: Read pp.264-271 (Pronoun Cases)		
Wed (1) 23 Jan	Grammar Review Exam	*DCRS*: Read and annotate Chapter 7, pp. 245-284.	Paper Editing Workshop/Paper Conferences
Thur (2) 24 Jan	Grammar Review Exam Critique		
Fri (1) 25 Jan	*GRSAT*: Do Sections 9 and 10 in class and discuss.	*MHR* Reading: p. 304, "Stone Soup" Or Instructor's Option	
Sat 26 Jan	**SAT (Mandatory)**		
Mon (2) 28 Jan		*DCRS*: Part 5, In-class essay analysis/discussion, pp. 489-497, "Is Google Making Us Stupid"	**HWE6 due**
Tue (1) 29 Jan		*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete all exercises for Part 5, pp. 444-456.	
Wed (2) 30 Jan		*DCRS*: Part 5, In-class essay analysis/discussion (Instructor selection).	
Thur 31 Jan	**MID-QUARTER MATH EXAM 0800; ENGLISH EXAM 1300**		
Fri 1 Feb	**GRADING DAY**		
Mon (1) 4 Feb	Midterm Exam Critique *LBH*: Read Chapter 49, pp. 731-748.	*BL*: Read pp.4-17 "Plot"	Receive and discuss HWE7 assignment.
Tue (2) 5 Feb		*BL*: Read pp. 18-27 "A & P"	
Wed (1) 6 Feb		*BL*: Read pp. 28-33 "Point of View" Read pp. 33-41, " A Rose For Emily" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	
Thur (2) 7 Feb		*BL*: Read pp.51-53 Read pp. 48-50, "A Haunted	

		House" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	
Fri (1) 8 Feb		*BL*: Read pp. 54-55 "Character" Read pp. 69-77, "Everyday Use" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	
Mon (2) 11 Feb		*BL*: Read pp. 90-92 Read pp. 77-90, "Cathedral" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	
DATE	**GRAMMAR/SAT**	**DCRS/MHR/BL**	**WRITING**
Tue (1) 12 Feb	Short Story Elements Quiz	*BL*: Read pp. 93-95 "Setting" Read pp. 106-119, "To Build A Fire" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	
Wed (2) 13 Feb		*BL*: Read pp. 136-137 Read pp. 100-106, "The Gospel According To Mark" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	HWE7 Draft Due
Thur (1) 14 Feb		*BL*: Read pp. 138-142 "Tone & Style" Read pp. 142-147, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	Workshopping/Paper Conferences
Fri (2) 15 Feb **½ Day**		*BL*: Read pp. 171-173 Read pp. 164-168, "The Gift of the Magi" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	Workshopping/Paper Conferences
MON 18 FEB	**PRESIDENTS DAY HOLIDAY- NO CLASSES**		
Tue (1) 19 Feb		*BL*: Read pp. 174-177 "Theme" Read pp. 194-213, " The Open Boat" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	Workshopping/Paper Conferences
Wed (2) 20 Feb		*BL*: Read pp. 223-224 Read pp. 216-222, "Harrison Bergeron" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	Workshopping/Paper Conferences
Thur (1) 21 Feb	Short Story Elements Quiz	*BL*: Read pp. 225-228 "Symbol" Read pp. 237-251, "The	

		Yellow Wallpaper" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	
Fri (2) 22 Feb		*BL*: Read pp. 266-268 Read pp. 258-266, "The Lottery" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	HWE7 Due
Mon (1) 25 Feb		Read pp. 304-315, "Young Goodman Brown" or Instructor's Choice	
Tue (2) 26 Feb	Exam Review	Read pp. 315-321, "Araby" or Instructor's Choice	
Wed 27 Feb	**ENGLISH FINAL EXAM**		
Thur 28 Feb	**MATH FINAL EXAM**		
Fri 1 Mar	**GRADING DAY**		
Mon 4 Mar	**EXAM CRITIQUE DAY**		

U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY PREPARATORY SCHOOL
EN24 FOURTH QUARTER STANDARD ENGLISH SYLLABUS

DAYS 1 & 2
5 March 2013 – 9 May 2013

Fourth Quarter Required Texts
Little Brown Handbook 11th Ed. (LBH); Documentation of Academic Work (DAW); Academic Standard Operating Procedures (SOP); Backpack Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing (BL); plays or novels as assigned by the individual instructor.

General Guidance
All students are expected to bring all texts to class unless specifically directed otherwise by the instructor. Assignments are due on the day they are listed. Laptops will not be opened in English class without teacher's permission.

Homework Assignments:
Instructors may alter class and homework assignments to suit the needs and the abilities of the students and to meet the in-class time constraints that the quantity and the difficulty of the materials impose on both teachers and students. These alterations may include the reduction of materials and the full or partial alteration of assignments from one day to another so long as the essentials are covered by the last day of instruction prior to quarter midterm and final examinations.

Two-Hour Day "1" Classes:
Attendance is mandatory. Writing activities will include, but are not limited to, the following: writing journals, drafts or final copies of assigned compositions; performing peer evaluations of drafts or final copies of assigned compositions; sharing possible topics with peers and/or instructor; discussing the conventions of standard written English (grammar, rhetoric, and usage). Individual instructors will determine Day "2" class assignments and conference schedules unless otherwise noted on assignment sheet.

Date	Backpack Literature	Novel, Play, or As Assigned	Writing/Speaking
Tue (1) 5 Mar	Introduce poetry as a literary genre; discuss Chapter 9, pp. 377-392 and Chapter 21, pp. 577-79.	Discuss paperbacks to be purchased	Distribute HWE8
Wed (2) 6 Mar	**Take Nelson-Denny reading test in class**		
Thur (1) 7 Mar	Paraphrase and Analyze "Loveliest of trees, the cherry now," pp. 615-616, or instructor option.		HWE8 Workshop
Fri 8-17 MAR	**NO CLASSES; CCs released at 1300** **SPRING BREAK**		
Mon (2) 18 Mar	Discuss Chapter 10, "Voice," pp. 393-417. Review Terms p. 416-417	"The Workbox," by Thomas Hardy, p.411 / instructor option	Write "Reflections on Spring Break" journal
Tue (1) 19 Mar	Discuss Chapter 11, "Words," pp. 418-436	"Batter my heart, three-personed God," John Donne, p. 420 / instructor option	
Wed (2) 20 Mar	Apply Chapter 11 Review Terms p. 435-436		
Thu (1) 21 Mar	Discuss Chapter 13, "Imagery," pp. 448-461	"Bright star! Would I were steadfast as thou art," John Keats, p.457 / instructor option	
Fri (2) 22 Mar	Apply Chapter 13 Review Terms pp. 461		
Mon (1) 25 Mar	Discuss Chapter 14, "Figures of Speech," pp. 462-480	"The Eagle," Alfred, Lord Tennyson, p. 463; "Sonnet 18," p. 463 / instructor option	
Tue (2) 26 Mar	Apply Chapter 14 Review Terms pp. 479-480		**Writing Lab 1830-2030**
Wed (1) 27 Mar	Discuss Chapter 15, "Sound," pp. 481-495	"Eight O'Clock," A.E. Housman, p. 485 / instructor option	
Thur (2) 28 Mar	Apply Chapter 15 Review Terms p. 495		
Fri (1) 29 Mar	Discuss Chapter 16, "Rhythm," pp. 496-511	"Break, Break, Break," Alfred, Lord Tennyson, p.501 / instructor option	**HWE8 due**

Date	Backpack Literature	Novel, Play, or As Assigned	Writing/Speaking
Mon (2) 1 Apr	Apply Chapter 16 Review Terms p. 511		
Tue (1) 2 Apr	Discuss Chapters 17 &18, "Closed & Open Forms," pp. 512-547	"Sonnet 116," Shakespeare, p. 522 / instructor's option "The Wayfarer," Stephen Crane, p. 539 / instructor option	
Wed (2) 3 Apr	Apply Chapters 17 &18 Review Terms pp. 531-532, 547	"Sonnet 130," p. 637.	
Thur (1) 4 Apr	Discuss and Apply Chapters 19 & 20, " Symbol" & "Myth & Narrative," pp. 548-576Review Terms pp. 560, 576	"The Road Not Taken," Robert Frost, p. 555; "The world is too much with us," William Wordsworth, p. 563; "Sonnet 55," p. 637 / instructor option	
Fri (2) 5 Apr	**Poetry Exam**		
Mon 8 Apr	**MID-QUARTER EXAMS**		
Tue 9 Apr	**EXAM GRADING DAY**		
Wed 10 Apr	**0800-1000: Basic Writing Skills Exam (BWSE)II** **TBD: Mathematics Basic Skills Entrance Exam**		
Thur 11 Apr	**ACT Testing**		
Fri (1) 12 Apr ½ Day	**In-class exam critiques**	Introduce 1st play or novel as assigned	Discussion of Paper 2 topics. Argumentative: literary or current event
Mon (2) 15 Apr		Reading/discussion as assigned (cont.)	Writing thesis sentence and opening paragraph
Tue (1) 16 Apr		Reading/discussion as assigned (cont.)	Student conferences or as assigned **Writing Lab 1830-2030**
Wed (2) 17 Apr		Reading/discussion as assigned (cont.)	Student conferences or as assigned
Thu (1) 18 Apr	**USMAPS Poetry Night** **Bates Auditorium**	Reading/discussion as assigned (cont.)	Student conferences or as assigned

Date	Backpack Literature	Novel, Play, or As Assigned	Writing/Speaking
Fri (2) 19 Apr		Finish reading/discussion of 1st literary work	HWE9 peer review

Mon (1) 22 Apr			HWE9 peer review (cont.)
Tue (2) 23 Apr	**Published Authors Night**	Begin reading/discussion of 2nd work	
Wed (1) 24 Apr		Reading/discussion of 2nd work (cont.)	**HWE9 due**
Thu (2) 25 Apr		Reading/discussion of 2nd work (cont.)	
Fri (1) 26 Apr ½ Day		Reading/discussion of 2nd work (cont.)	Begin Speeches/Recitations
Mon (2) 29 Apr		Reading/discussion of 2nd work (cont.)	Begin Speeches/Recitations
Tue (1) 30 Apr		Finish reading/discussion of 2nd work	Begin Speeches/Recitations
Wed (2) 1 May			Begin Speeches/Recitations
Thu (1) 2 May			Begin Speeches/Recitations
Fri (2) 3 May	Review for Fourth Quarter Final Exam		Finish Speeches/Recitations
Mon 6 May	**MATH FINAL EXAM**		
Tue 7 May	**ENGLISH FINAL EXAM**		
Wed 8 May	**GRADING DAY**		
Thur 9 May	**FOURTH QUARTER EXAM CRITIQUE DAY**		

4th Quarter Standard Grade Breakdown			
HWE7	150 points	Final Exam	200 points
HWE8	300 points	Instructor Points	100 points
Midterm Exam/Poetry	150 points	**TOTAL**	1,000 points
GE 4	100 points		

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY PREPARATORY SCHOOL
EN21S 1ST QUARTER STANDARD ENGLISH SYLLABUS
21 August 2013 – 21 October 2013

Quarter Objectives: The primary objectives of the first quarter are for students to successfully transition to performing college-level work and to begin the process of mastering essential concepts of grammar, critical reading, and writing.

First Quarter Required Texts: *Workbook (WB); Little Brown Handbook 12th Ed. (LBH); Developing Critical Reading Skills, 9th Ed. (DCRS); McGraw-Hill Reader, 12th Ed. (MHR); Documentation of Academic Work (DAW); Class of 2014 Planner; Gruber's Complete SAT Guide 2014 (SAT).*

Homework Assignments:
Instructors may alter class and homework assignments in accordance with the needs and abilities of their students and in light of available classroom time, as long as students are fully prepared for all graded events. Students must bring all texts to class unless directed otherwise by their instructor. Laptops are for use in English class only as specified by the instructor.

#	Date-Day			*LBH*/WB/SAT	*DCRS/MHR*	Writing
1	August	21	W 1			Discuss First Quarter Syllabus, Academic SOP, HWE 1 and HWE8; write Journal 1 in class
2		22	TH 2	*LBH*: Study Chapter 1	-*DCRS*: Discuss "To the Student" and "Introduction," pp. 1-8, in class -*MHR*: "How to Mark a Book"	Teacher option: Write Journal 2, Pre-Writing for HWE1, in class/complete Day 1 admin.
3		23	F 1	*LBH:* Study Chapter 2 - Parts of Speech: Study *LBH*, pp. 252-267; do Ex 12.2 & 12.6 - WB: pp. 3	*MHR*: "Once More to the Lake"	
4		26	M 2	Verbs: Study *LBH*, pp. 294-300; do 14.1 & 14.2	*MHR*: "Salvation"	Paper Conferences/Workshopping
5		27	T 1	*LBH:* Study Chapter 30 and do 30.1, 30.2, & 30.5	-*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete pp. 45-58 -*MHR: pp. 71-75*	Write Practice Summary in class
6		28	W 2	Verbals and Verbal Phrases: -Study *LBH*, pp. 267-270; do 12.11 & 12.12 -WB: do p. 6 - *LBH*: Study pp. 312-317	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete Chapter 1	
7		29	TH 1	Grammar Quiz 1	*LBH*: Read pp. 144-154	**HWE1 draft due**
		30	F	**TEACHER IN-SERVICE DAY**		
		31	M	**LABOR DAY WEEKEND- NO CLASSES**		
8	September	3	T 2	*LBH:* Chapter 3		
9		4	W 1	Subject-Verb Agreement: -*LBH*: study pp. 323-330; do 15.1, -WB: do pp. 10-	-*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete pp. 58-79 -*MHR*: Read "An	Write Summary 1 in class.

				11	American Childhood"	
10		5	TH 2	*LBH: Chapter 4*	*MHR*: Read "Superman and Me"	
11		6	F 1	Grammar Quiz 2	Discuss *MHR* readings	Begin Paper Conferences
12		9	M 2			Write Summary 2 in class
13		10	T 1	-*SAT*: Do Section 4 of SAT Practice Test 1 in class -Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement: *LBH*: study Ch. 15b, pp. 331-335; do 15.2, 15.3 , and 15.4	*DCRS***:** Read, annotate, and complete pp. 120-132	
14		11	W 2.5	Grammar Quiz 3	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete pp. 132-160	**HWE1 due**
15		12	TH 1		*MHR***:** Read "My Creature from the Black Lagoon"	**ICE 1**
16		13	F 2	Exam Review Day WB: pp.12, 15, 22-23		
		16	M	**MID-QUARTER MATH EXAM 0800; ENGLISH EXAM 1300**		

	September October	17	T	**GRADING DAY**		
		18	W	**MATH RESECTIONING DAY**		
17		19	TH 1	*SAT*: Do Section 5 of SAT Practice Test 1 in class		**HWE2 Assigned**
18		20	F 2		-*MHR*: Read "In Sable and Dark Glasses" -*MHR:* "Definition," pp. 80-81	
19		23	M 1	Pronoun Case: *LBH*: Study Ch. 13, do 13.1 & 13.5 -WB: p. 14		
20		24	T 2	Pronoun Reference: *LBH*: Study Ch. 19; do 19.1, & 19.2		
21		25	W 1	Grammar Quiz 4	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete Chapter 3	Practice Critical Reading Exercise **HWE2 draft due**
22		26	TH 2	*LBH*: Read Chapter 6		Paper Conferences/Workshopping
23		27	F 1	Recognizing Phrases, Clauses, and Sentence Types: *LBH*: Study pp. 271-286. Do 12.15, 12.16, 12.17, & 12.21		**CRE I**
24		30	M 2	Sentence Fragments: *LBH*: Study Chapter 17. Do 17.1-17.3	*MHR*: Read "Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space"	
25	October	1	T 1	Comma Splices and Fused Sentences: *LBH*: read Chapter 18, Do 18.1-18.4.		Paper Workshopping

26		2	W 2	-Grammar Quiz 5 -*SAT*: Do Section 7 of SAT Practice Test 1 in class		**HWE2 due**
		3	TH	**TEACHER IN-SERVICE DAY**		
		4	F	**TEACHER IN-SERVICE DAY**		
27		7	M 1	The Comma: *LBH*: Study pp. 444-455. Do 28.1-28.7	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete Chapter 5	
28		8	T 2	The Comma (cont.): *LBH*: Study pp. 455-465. Do 28.8 -28.13 -*LBH*: read pp. 493-494		
29		9	W 1		*MHR*: Read "Sex Ed"	**ICE 2**
30		10	TH 2	*LBH*: Study pp. 482-483 WB: p. 28		**CRE II**
31		11	F 1	The Semicolon: *LBH*: Study pp. 465-473. Do 29.1-29.6 -WB: p. 28		
		14	M	**COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY – NO CLASSES**		
32		15	T 2	Exam Review Day WB: pp. 24-25 & 29-30		WB: do Sentence Usage Exs. III-IV, pp. 24-25
		16	W	**ENGLISH FINAL EXAM**		
		17	TH	**MATH FINAL EXAM**		
		18	F	**GRADING DAY**		
		21	M	**EXAM CRITIQUE DAY**		

1st Quarter Standard Grade Breakdown					
HWE1	150	CRE I	25	ICE1	50
HWE2	150	CRE II	25	Mid-Quarter Exam	150
Summary I	25	Quizzes	50	ICE2	100
Summary II	25	Instructor Points	100	Final Exam	150
				Total	**1,000**

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY PREPARATORY SCHOOL
EN22S 2nd QUARTER STANDARD ENGLISH SYLLABUS
22 October 2013 – 20 December 2013

Quarter Objectives: The primary objectives of the second quarter are for students to continue the process of mastering essential concepts of grammar, critical reading, and argumentative writing and documentation as well as to develop their public speaking skills.

Second Quarter Required Texts: *Workbook (WB); Little Brown Handbook 12th Ed. (LBH); Developing Critical Reading Skills, 9th Ed. (DCRS); McGraw-Hill Reader, 12th Ed. (MHR); Documentation of Academic Work (DAW); Class of 2014 Planner; Gruber's Complete SAT Guide 2014 (SAT).*

Homework Assignments:
Instructors may alter class and homework assignments in accordance with the needs and abilities of their students and in light of available classroom time, as long as students are fully prepared for all graded events. Students must bring all texts to class unless directed otherwise by their instructor. Laptops are for use in English class only as specified by the instructor.

#	Date-Day				*LBH*/WB/SAT	*DCRS/MHR*	Writing
1	October	22	T	1	Distribute 2nd Quarter Syllabus and Discuss	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete pp. 302-330	Assign HWE3
2		23	W	2	*LBH*: Study sections 42j and 43d-43e		
3		24	TH	1	-Grammar Quiz 1 -Do Sections 9 and 10 of SAT - Practice Test 1in class; discuss.	-*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete pp. 331-352	Instructor Option: HWE 3 prewriting/topics
		25	F		**PARENTS' WEEKEND 25OCT-27OCT**		
4		28	M	2	*LBH*: Study Chapter 45	*MHR*: "Why I Hunt"	
5		29	T	1		*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete all exercises for Ch.9 pp. 353-364	HWE3 draft due
6		30	W	2			Paper Conferences
7		31	TH	1	-Quiz 2 -*LBH*: Study Chapter 46 do 46.1		Workshopping/ Paper Conferences
8	November	1	F	2	WB: Read pp. 38-43 and do 52-55	*MHR*: "Why the Rich are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer"	Workshopping/ Paper Conferences
9		4	M	1	-WB: Do. 21 -Do Section 4 of SAT Practice Test 2 in class and discuss -*LBH:* Study pp. 320-322; do 14.11		Paper Editing Workshop/Paper Conferences
10		5	T	2	WB: Do Editing Exercise IV, p. 31	*MHR*: "I'm So Totally, Digitally, Close to You"	
11		6	W	1	Do Section 5 of SAT Practice Test 2 in class and discuss	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete all exercises Chapter 9 pp. 364-376	

12		7	TH 2	-WB: do p. 26 -Quiz 3		**HWE3 Due** Assign HWE4
13		8	F 1.5	WB: Read pp. 43-44 and do p. 56		**CRE III** in class (DCRS required)
		11	M	**VETERANS DAY- NO CLASSES**		
14		12	T 2	-WB: Do pp. 32-33 - LBH: Study pp. 176-185	*MHR*: "The Allegory of the Cave"	
15		13	W 1			**ICE1**
16		14	TH 2	-Exam Review -WB: Do pp. 62-63 and 72-73 -Quiz 4		
		15	F	**MIDTERM EXAMS**		
		18	M	**GRADING DAY**		
17	November	19	T 1	-Do Section 9 and Section 10 of SAT Practice Test 2 in class and discuss - *LBH*: Study chapter 44; do 44.1		-Write Practice SAT Essay In Class - HWE4 draft due
18		20	W 2		*MHR*: "Family Values"	
19		21	TH 1	-WB: Read pp.45-49; do pp.57-58. -Do Section 4 of SAT Practice Test 3		Paper Conferences/Workshopping
20		22	F 2		*MHR*: "Politics and the English Language"	Paper Conferences/Workshopping
21		25	M 1			-**CRE IV** in class (DCRS required) -Assign Speech
22		26	T 2	-WB: Read pp. 49-50; do pp. 59-60 -WB: pp. 74-75 - *LBH*: Study Chapter 56		
23		27	W 1.5	WB: Do pp. 76-77	*DCRS*: Chapter 9, Read, annotate, and complete all exercises, pp. 376-406	**HWE4 due**
		28	TH	**THANKSGIVING**		
		29	F			
24	December	2	M 2	-WB: Do Editing Ex. VI, pp. 34-36 in class and discuss -Quiz 5		
25		3	T 1		*MHR*: "A Modest Proposal"	Begin Speeches
26		4	W 2			Continue Speeches
27		5	TH 1			Continue Speeches Write Practice SAT Essay In Class
28		6	F 2			Complete Speeches

29		9	M 1	-WB: Read pp. 50-51; do p. 61. -Do Section 5 of SAT Practice Test 3 in class and discuss		Makeup Speeches (as required)
30		10	T 2		*LBH*: Do "Exercise on Chapters 13-16," p. 349	
31		11	W 1	-Vocabulary Review -Grammar Review		
32		12	TH 2			**GE2**
33		13	F 1			**ICE2**
34		16	M 2	-Final Exam Review -WB: Do Review Exercise II, p. 64		
		17	T	**Math Final**		
		18	W	**English Final**		
		19	TH	**GRADING DAY**		
		20	F	**EXAM CRITIQUE**		

2ND Quarter Standard Grade Breakdown					
HWE 3	150	CRE III	50	ICE1	50
HWE 4	150	CRE IV	50	Mid-Quarter Exam	100
GE 2	100	Quizzes	50	ICE2	50
Speech	50	Instructor Points	100	Final Exam	100
				Total	**1,000**

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY PREPARATORY SCHOOL
EN23S 3rd QUARTER STANDARD ENGLISH SYLLABUS
6 January 2014 – 4 March 2014

Quarter Objectives: The primary objectives of the third quarter are for students to review the grammar they learned during the first two quarters; continue to develop their critical reading skills; improve their public speaking skills; begin discussing literature; and refine their ability to write an argumentative essay using fiction and non-fiction.

Third Quarter Required Texts: *Little Brown Handbook 11th Ed. (LBH); Developing Critical Reading Skills, 9th Ed. (DCRS); McGraw-Hill Reader, 11th Ed. (MHR); Documentation of Academic Work (DAW); Academic Standard Operating Procedures (SOP); Gruber's Complete SAT Guide 2014 (SAT); Backpack Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing (BL); Getting Ready for the SAT (GRSAT)*

Homework Assignments:
Instructors may alter class and homework assignments in accordance with the needs and abilities of their students and in light of available classroom time, as long as students are fully prepared for all graded events. Students must bring all texts to class unless directed otherwise by their instructor. Laptops are for use in English class only as specified by the instructor.

#	Date-Day			*LBH*/WB/SAT	*DCRS/MHR*	Writing
1	January	6	M 1	-*LBH*: Study Chapters 44 and 41 - *SAT*: pp. 453-464 -*LBH*: Study 18a		Discuss 3rd Quarter Syllabus; discuss SOP; **receive and discuss HWE5 assignment**; write Journal, "Course Expectations"
2		7	T 2			**GE3**
3		8	W 1	- *SAT* pp. 465-489. -Do Section 7 of SAT Practice Test 3 in class and discuss	- *MHR:* "The Cult of Ethnicity" Or Instructor's Option -Discussion of assigned article for HWE5	Instructor Option: HWE5 prewriting/topics.
4		9	TH 2	**Quiz #1**		
5		10	F 1	-Do Section 5 of SAT Practice Test 3 in class and discuss -*LBH*: Study 18c and Chapter 42		Annotated Bibliography: Read pp. 557-560 and pp. 590-n the *LBH.*
6		13	M 2	*SAT*: Read pp. 490-508 *LBH*: Read 15b	*DCRS*: Read, annotate and complete all exercises pp. 190-199.	
7		14	T 1	Do Sections 9 and 10 of SAT Practice Test 3in class and discuss	*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete all exercises pp. 218-229.	Workshopping/ Paper Conferences Annotated Bibliography Due
8		15	W 2	*LBH*: Read pp.301-308 (Subject/ Verb Agreement) **-Quiz #2**	-*MHR*: "The Globalization of Eating Disorders" Or Instructor's Option	Workshopping/ Paper Conferences
9		16	TH 1	-*GRSAT*: Read pp. 1-10 -Do Section 3 in class and discuss -*LBH*: Read Chapter 43		Workshopping/Paper Conferences

10		17	F 2.5	*LBH*: Review Chapter 47		Workshopping/Paper Conferences
		20	M	**MLK HOLIDAY**		
11		21	T 1	*GRSAT*: Do Sections 9 and 10 in class and discuss	*MHR:* "Stone Soup" Or Instructor's Option	
12		22	W 2	*GRSAT*: Do Section 7 in class and discuss *LBH*: Study chapter 13		
13		23	TH 1		*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete all exercises pp. 245-284	Paper Editing Workshop/Paper Conferences
14		24	F 2	**Quiz #3**		Workshopping/Paper Conferences
		25	S	**SAT**		
15		27	M 1		*DCRS*: Part 5, In-class essay analysis/discussion, pp. 489-497, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?"	**HWE5 due**
16	January	28	T 2		*DCRS*: Read, annotate, and complete all exercises for Part 5, pp. 444-456	
17		29	W 1		*DCRS*: Part 5, In-class essay analysis/discussion (Instructor selection).	
18		30	TH 2	Midterm Review		
		31	F	**MIDTERM EXAMS**		
	February	3	M	**GRADING DAY**		
19		4	T 1	Midterm Exam Critique *LBH*: Read Chapter 49	*BL*: Read pp.4-17 and "A & P"	Receive and discuss HWE6 assignment.
20		5	W 2		*BL*: Read "Point of View" Read " A Rose For Emily" or Short Story of Instructor's choice	
21		6	TH 1		*BL*: Read pp. 51-53 and "A Haunted House" or instructor's choice	
22		7	F 2		*BL*: Read pp. 54-55 and "Everyday Use" or instructor's choice	
23		10	M 1		*BL*: Read pp. 90-92 and "Cathedral" or instructor's choice	
24		11	T 2	**Quiz #4**	*BL*: Read pp. 93-95 and "To Build A Fire" or instructor's choice	
25		12	W 1		*BL*: Read pp. 136-137 and "The Gospel According To Mark" or instructor's choice	HWE6 Draft Due
26		13	TH 2		*BL*: Read pp. 138-142 and "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" or instructor's choice	Workshopping/Paper Conferences

27		14	F 1		*BL*: Read pp. 171-173 and "The Gift of the Magi" or instructor's choice	Workshopping/Paper Conferences
		17	M	**PRESIDENTS' DAY**		
28		18	T 2		*BL*: Read pp. 174-177 and " The Open Boat" or instructor's choice	Workshopping/Paper Conferences
29		19	W 1		*BL*: Read pp. 223-224 and "Harrison Bergeron" or instructor's choice	Workshopping/Paper Conferences
30		20	TH 2		*BL*: Read pp. 225-228 and "The Yellow Wallpaper" or Instructor's choice	
31		21	F 1		*BL*: Read pp. 266-268 and "The Lottery" or Instructor's choice	
32		24	M 2	**Quiz #5**	Read "Young Goodman Brown" or Instructor's Choice	HWE6 Due
33		25	T 1		Read pp. 315-321, "Araby" or Instructor's Choice	
34		26	W 2	Exam Review		
		27	TH	**ENGLISH FINAL**		
		28	F	**MATH FINAL**		
	MAR	3	M	**GRADING DAY**		
		4	T	**EXAM CRITIQUE**		

3rd Quarter Standard Grade Breakdown

HWE5, including Annotated Bibliography	250	Quizzes	100	Speech	100
HWE6	200	Midterm	100	Instructor Points	100
		Final Exam	150	**Total**	**1,000**

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY PREPARATORY SCHOOL
EN24S 4th QUARTER STANDARD ENGLISH SYLLABUS
5 March 2014 – 9 May 2014

Quarter Objective: The primary objective of the fourth quarter is for students to internalize the essential elements of critical reading and argumentative writing they will need for success in the English and humanities portions of the USMA curriculum; students will achieve this objective by focusing on the poetry and literature that form the basis for this quarter.

Fourth Quarter Required Texts: *Little Brown Handbook 11th Ed. (LBH); Documentation of Academic Work (DAW); Academic Standard Operating Procedures (SOP); Backpack Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing (BL)*; plays or novels as assigned by the individual instructor.

Homework Assignments:
Instructors may alter class and homework assignments in accordance with the needs and abilities of their students and in light of available classroom time, as long as students are fully prepared for all graded events. Students must bring all texts to class unless directed otherwise by their instructor. Laptops are for use in English class only as specified by the instructor.

#	Date-Day			*Backpack Literature*	Novel, play, or as assigned	Writing/Speaking
1	MARCH	5	W 1	Read chapters 9 and 21	Discuss paperbacks to be purchased	Distribute HWE7 Review specific HWE 8 requirements
2		6	TH 2	**NELSON-DENNY TEST**		
3		7	F 1	Paraphrase and Analyze "Loveliest of trees, the cherry now" or instructor option		HWE7 Workshop
4		10	M 2	Discuss Chapter 10 and review terms pp. 416-417	"The Workbox" or instructor option	
5		11	T 1	Discuss Chapter 11	"Batter my heart, three-personed God" or instructor option	
6		12	W 2	Apply Chapter 11 review terms p. 435-436		
7		13	TH 1	Discuss Chapter 13	"Bright star! Would I were steadfast as thou art" or instructor option	
8		14	F 2.5	Apply Chapter 13 review Terms p. 461		
		17-21		**SPRING BREAK**		
9		24	M 1	Discuss Chapter 14	"The Eagle" and "Sonnet 18" or instructor option	Write "Reflections on Spring Break" journal
10		25	T 2	Apply Chapter 14 Review Terms pp. 479-480		
11		26	W 1	Discuss Chapter 15	"Eight O'Clock" or instructor option	
12		27	TH 2	Apply Chapter 15 review terms p. 495		**USMAPS Poetry Night** **Bates Auditorium**

13		28	F 1	Discuss Chapter 16	"Break, Break, Break" or instructor option	
14		31	M 2	Apply Chapter 16 review terms p. 511		**HWE7 DUE**
15	APRIL	1	T 1	Discuss Chapters 17 &18	"Sonnet 116" and "The Wayfarer" or instructor option	
16		2	W 2	Apply Chapters 17 &18 review terms pp. 531-532, 547	"Sonnet 130"	
17		3	TH 1	Discuss and apply chapters 19 & 20	-"The Road Not Taken" -"The world is too much with" -"Sonnet 55"	
18		4	F 2	**Poetry Exam**		
	APRIL	7	M	**MIDTERM EXAMS**		
		8	T	**GRADING DAY**		
		9	W	**USMAPS TESTING**		
		10	TH	**ACT**		
19		11	F 1	**In-class exam critiques**	Introduce 1st play or novel as assigned	HWE8
20		14	M 2		Reading/discussion as assigned	
21		15	T 1		Reading/discussion as assigned	Student conferences or as assigned
22		16	W 2		Reading/discussion as assigned	Student conferences or as assigned
		17	TH 1		Reading/discussion as assigned	Student conferences or as assigned
23		18	F 2		Reading/discussion as assigned	**HWE8 DUE**
24		21	M 1		Finish reading/discussion of 1st literary work	
25		22	T 2		Begin reading/discussion of 2nd work	
26		23	W 1		Reading/discussion of 2nd work	**Published Authors Night**
		24	TH	**USMA MISSION COMMAND DAY- NO CLASSES**		
27		25	F 2	**AMERICAN ODYSSEY RELAY- NO CLASSES**		
28		28	M 1		Reading/discussion of 2nd work	Begin Speeches/Recitations
29		29	T 2		Reading/discussion of 2nd work	Speeches/Recitations
30		30	W 1		Finish reading/discussion of 2nd work	Speeches/Recitations
31	MAY	1	TH 2.5			Speeches/Recitations
32		2	F 1			**-GE4** -Speeches/Recitations

33		5	M 2	Review for Final Exam		Finish Speeches/Recitations
		6	T	**ENGLISH FINAL**		
		7	W	**MATH FINAL**		
		8	TH	**GRADING DAY**		
		9	F	**EXAM CRITIQUE**		

4TH Quarter Standard Grade Breakdown			
HWE 7	150	GE 4	100
HWE 8	300	Final Exam	200
Midterm/ Poetry Exam	150	Instructor Points	100
		Total	**1,000**

Appendix D

Pilot Study

During the initial phase of my data collection, I conducted a Pilot Study of what turned out to be three of my four qualitative collection methods: interviews, classroom observations, and a focus group discussion. My fourth collection method, surveys, was not included in my Pilot Study.

Interviews

Based on several classes I had taken as part of the coursework for my doctoral program, I knew that interviews constituted a major portion of much qualitative research, and I also felt that interviews would enable me to gain great insights into the perceptions of student and instructor alike regarding the impact that the USMAPS English program had had on USMAPS graduates' performance in the USMA English program. As we see in Irving Seidman's *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (9) and "At the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth" (9). Prior to conducting my data collection, I strongly felt, by virtue of my long experience as a teacher and student, that students and instructors would have much of worth to say about their perceptions regarding the USMAPS English program and its connection to the USMA English program, so I wanted to use interviewing as one of my primary data collection methods, but I wanted to try it before deciding whether to include more interviews, hence my pilot study's use of interviews.

Additionally, there exists a wide variety of ways to structure an interview, and I again turned to Seidman, this time for advice regarding which technique to use for my interviews. As the opening to his chapter about structuring interviews, Seidman claims

that "The word *interviewing* covers a wide range of practices. There are tightly structured, survey interviews with preset, standardized, normally closed questions. At the other end of the continuum are open-ended, apparently unstructured, anthropological interviews that might be seen almost…as friendly conversations" (15). I decided to use the former technique for my pilot study because although I wanted to have a relaxed environment in which my subjects felt comfortable expressing their feelings, I had specific information that I wanted them to address, so I developed a list of detailed questions prior to the interviews and conducted them according to these questions. As things turned out, all of my pilot study interviews went quite well, and I used the same list of questions for each of my subjects.

For these pilot study interviews, I contacted three instructors then teaching in the USMA Department of English—the spring of 2012—explained that I was doing a pilot study for part of my doctoral coursework, and asked if they would be willing for me to interview them about their feelings regarding the performance of USMAPS graduates in their English class. All three instructors responded positively to my request, so I established an interview schedule based on our mutual schedules. I conducted all three interviews over a two week time-span, and all interviews took place in each instructor's office. The interviews lasted approximately seventy-five minutes on average, and I recorded all three interviews, after gaining permission from each subject to do so. I told each instructor that he would be anonymous and that there would be no way to connect him to any responses of his that I might include in subsequent writing about the interview. I then fully transcribed one of the interviews and coded it as part of the process of learning how to transcribe interviews and then code them. I will address the responses of the interviewees in the next section of this chapter, but the questions that I asked each respondent are as follows:

1. How long have you been teaching at West Point?
2. Do you know how many Prepsters you have had in each section (class), on average?
3. In the classroom, do you notice which students are USMAPS graduates?
4. Do you find any noteworthy differences between the performance of your Prepsters and your Direct Admits, in terms of reading, writing, or speaking?
5. Do you recall the extent to which you have to work with Prepsters as opposed to how much time you devote to Direct Admits?
6. Have you formed any general impressions of how well the USMAPS English program has prepared its students for the USMA English program?
7. Is there anything that you would like to add to this interview at this time?

The process of conducting interviews as part of a pilot study was invaluable because it showed me that interviews were indeed an extremely useful data collection method regarding gauging respondents' perceptions about the topic at hand, and it also showed me that conducting a thorough interview required a great deal of preparation prior to the interview and attentiveness during the interview. All three of the interviews had a relaxed but professional atmosphere, and I felt no pressure at all regarding how long the interview was taking, the comfort level of the respondent, or anything of that sort, but I did feel a significant amount of pressure to conduct the interview smoothly and ask questions that would cause the interviewee to feel that the interview was worth his time. For my pilot study interviews, I contacted only instructors because I wanted to refine my interview techniques before interviewing any students, and I felt as if I would get more candid, helpful feedback about the interviews from instructors than from students, who might feel reluctant to offer constructive criticism of my interview questions or process. I was fortunate to receive several helpful suggestions from the instructors I interviewed, all of which focused on asking the questions clearly and slowly

so that they could easily understand them, and I applied all of these lessons-learned to the next set of interviews I conducted, a process I will describe shortly.

Observations

The second major aspect of my pilot study was the classroom observation. I decided to incorporate this data collection method into my pilot study because I felt that observing how USMAPS graduates and Direct Admits behaved in class might offer meaningful insight into the manner in which the USMAPS English program had impacted Prepsters and that it might offer this insight in a way that only observation could provide. Indeed, as Maxwell states in his *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, "While interviewing is often an efficient and valid way of understanding someone's perspective, observation can enable you to draw inferences about this perspective that you couldn't obtain by relying exclusively on interview data. This is particularly important for getting at tacit understandings … as well as aspects of the participants' perspectives that they are reluctant to directly state in interviews" (94). As Maxwell so perceptively states, I was hoping to use observations to gain data that I could not gain from interviews, although I must admit that I was unsure of exactly what I was looking for when I decided to do this initial round of interviews. Ultimately, I wanted to be a strictly non-participant observer in order to hopefully gain insight into whether I could even identify students as USMAPS graduates or Direct Admits by virtue of some aspects of their behavior in class, and, if so, what those aspects were and what they might offer regarding the impact of the Prep School English program on its graduates. I observed several things of importance during these observations, and I will discuss those things during the Findings and Analysis chapter of this dissertation.

In order to conduct my pilot study classroom observations, I contacted two instructors at the USMA Department of English in the spring of 2012, explained the

nature of my doctoral work, and asked them if I could observe their classrooms in order to conduct a pilot study of using observations as a data collection method. Both instructors kindly assented to my request, and we established specific times and dates for the observations, based on our respective schedules. I informed the instructors that I would be a non-participant observer but that I would be taking careful notes during my classroom observation. I also verified that the instructor and students would be anonymous and that any information I included in subsequent writing would be non-attributional and would offer no way to connect that information to the instructor or any student in the class.

The first observation occurred in the EN 302—Advanced Composition—classroom of a senior English instructor during the period immediately after lunch. This classroom contained fifteen cadets, an average number for USMA courses, and prior to observing this particular class, I verified that it had at least one USMAPS graduate, but I ensured that I did not ask which student(s) were Prepsters, in keeping with my aforementioned goal of using the observation to attempt to determine which students were Prepsters and which were not. My second observation was of a freshman literature course, EN 102, and it, too, was taught by an experienced member of the USMA English faculty. This section contained sixteen students, and I performed my observation during the last period of the day, 3-4 PM.

Both instructors very briefly introduced me to the class so that students would not wonder who I was or why I was in their class, but I maintained a strictly non-participatory role during both classes. There exists a wide variety of possibilities for the role of an observer during an observation, but most observer roles are either participant or non-participant, and a number of theories highlight the strengths and weaknesses of these two roles. I chose to be a strictly non-participatory observer because I knew that I would have access to a wide variety of classrooms for observations because of my long relationship with many of the faculty of the USMA English Department, so I did not need

to worry about one of the main strengths of participatory observation, which is the "…ability to gain access to events or groups that are otherwise inaccessible…" (Yin 94). Moreover, not being a participant observer let me avoid two of the major pitfalls of this practice, which are less time to work as an actual observer because of the role-playing demanded via being a participant and becoming unduly attached to the group being observed and thereby losing objectivity (95-6).

Although I did not realize it at the time, I later learned via feedback from my committee and additional reading of my own that my methodology for my classroom observations was flawed. Fundamentally, I should have thought much more deeply about not only what I would be looking for, and why, but also how I was going to record and recognize those things when I saw, or did not see, them. Additionally, I should have included an impartial observer during my observations so that I could have compared my notes with her or his notes because despite my best efforts, I was ultimately a biased observer because of my stake in the outcome of my observations.

Focus Group

After doing the observations as part of my pilot study, I was quite pleased with the results because of the insights I had gained via the observations, and I determined that classroom observations would definitely be a part of my data collection methods. With respect to the third data collection method I used during my pilot study, a focus group discussion, an interesting aspect of this technique is that it essentially combines elements of interviewing with observing. Because of the difficulty involved with navigating the schedules of the very busy cadets who were the members of the focus group, I was only able to coordinate one focus group discussion for my pilot study, but that one session was well worth the effort to put together.

The purpose of a focus group interview is "…to bring together a group of individuals representative of the population whose ideas are at interest" (Rubin 30) in order to enable those individuals to interact with one another during the course of what is essentially a group interview and thereby explore avenues that might not arise during individual interviews. In order to conduct my focus group interview, I contacted a cross-section of my former students who were at the end of their Plebe year because I knew that those students were similar in ability and performance to the average cross-section of USMAPS students and because I felt that they would be more willing to interact with me in a focus group discussion than would students whom I had not taught and gotten to know. These students were all males; three were African American, and two were Caucasian. Fortunately, and despite their hectic schedules, all five of the students I contacted for this event agreed to participate, and we conducted the session in one of the private rooms of the USMA Library, the Jefferson Center.

I had never conducted a focus group discussion and was quite curious regarding how it was going to proceed. The participants were arrayed in a U-shaped table that afforded them plenty of room, and I sat at the "head" of the table, with students to my left and right. I began the session by thanking them for taking the time to participate in this event, and I reminded them—as I had told them in the email I had sent them—that their responses would be non-attributional and that their identities would remain anonymous. I then told them that I realized that my previous relationship with them as their instructor had obvious ramifications for how they might respond to my questions, but I implored them to be completely candid in their replies because the worth of their answers depended in large part on that candor.

A series of eight questions formed the basis of our discussion, and all eight questions were directly related to my exploration of the perceptions of USMAPS graduates regarding the extent to which the USMAPS English program had prepared them for the USMA English program. The questions were:

1. How would you describe your experience in the USMAPS English program?
2. How would you characterize yourself as an English student at USMAPS?
3. What feelings do you have about the USMA English program?
4. Were there any surprises about the USMA English program?
5. What, if anything, would you change about the USMAPS English program?
6. What, if anything, would you change about the USMA English program?
7. Overall, how well do you feel that the USMAPS English program prepared you for the USMA English program?
8. Is there anything that you would like to add to our discussion at this point?

After posing each question, I opened the floor for discussion. I noticed—after asking the second question—that each student was answering the questions in the same sequence, so I asked the students to be more informal and to have more give-and-take regarding their discussion of the questions. Additionally, once I had asked the first question, each student responded to me directly instead of to the group, so I asked students to have a conversation with one another while responding to the questions instead of replying to me. The focus group discussion lasted approximately one hour, and I thanked the group for their participation once our discussion was complete.

As was the case with the individual interviews and the classroom observations, I learned very important lessons about using a focus group discussion as a data collection method. I enjoyed the camaraderie that the students displayed, and their answers were revealing in many ways, but ultimately I concluded that the focus group interviews did not offer any advantage to the individual interviews I had conducted. That is, the "new avenues of exploration" I mentioned previously did not open during the focus group discussion, and the participants never did seem fully at ease in this forum. Thus, I decided to use only individual interviews during the next phase of my research, and while I will wait until the Findings and Analysis chapter to discuss the results of those student interviews, I can say at this point that those interviews more than met my goals for them.

Once I had conducted my pilot study and reflected on its results, I knew that my research would include interviews and classroom observations. What I realized at only a much later date, though, was that I would want my study to also involve quantitative data, for reasons such as triangulation that I have already discussed. Thus, once I had made that second major decision regarding my data collection methods and of course had gained IRB approval for my research project, I was able to begin the formal part of my research.

Appendix E

Focus Group Protocol

1. Purpose: The purpose of a focus group interview is "…to bring together a group of individuals representative of the population whose ideas are at interest" (Rubin 30) in order to enable those individuals to interact with one another during the course of what is essentially a group interview and thereby explore avenues that might not arise during individual interviews.
2. Selection Process: In order to conduct my focus group interview, I contacted a specific cross-section of my former students who were at the end of their Plebe year because I knew that those students were similar in ability and performance to the average cross-section of USMAPS students, because I felt that they would be more willing to interact with me in a focus group discussion than would students whom I had not taught and gotten to know, and because their EN 101 experience was fresh in their minds. Of the eight students I contacted about participating in the focus group, five were ultimately able to mesh their schedules with those of the other participants. USMAPS has a small number of females, normally approximately 15%, and unfortunately none of my few female students were available for the focus group. However, the participants were racially diverse—three African Americans and two Caucasians—and, as previously mentioned, represented a cross section of USMAPS with respect to their academic ability and performance, which ranged from strong to weak.
3. Precautions: There was obviously the possibility that my students would not be candid with me because of their desire not to hurt my feelings or disappoint me, but I tried to mitigate that risk by clearly and strongly explaining to them that the entire merit of the focus group results rested on the candor of their comments. Conversely, though, selecting former students of mine for this group allowed me

to ensure that I was getting a strong cross-section of USMAPS students; moreover, these students' prior relationship with me arguably went a long way toward making them comfortable with the focus group process as well as fostering the confidence to answer candidly because they knew that I would take their responses seriously. To ensure that their rights as participants were respected and safeguarded, each participant received IRB-approved Informed Consent and Participant's Rights forms and signed the latter form. Additionally, at the beginning of the focus group discussion, I reiterated that all responses would be anonymous.

4. Procedures: I conducted the session in one of the private rooms of the USMA Library, the Jefferson Center. The participants were arrayed in a U-shaped table that afforded them plenty of room, and I sat at the "head" of the table, with students to my left and right. I began the session by thanking them for taking the time to participate in this event as well as by giving them the aforementioned reminder that all of their responses would be confidential and anonymous.

   A series of eight questions formed the basis of our discussion, and all eight questions were directly related to my exploration of the perceptions of USMAPS graduates regarding the extent to which the USMAPS English program had prepared them for the USMA English program. The questions were:

   1. How would you describe your experience in the USMAPS English program?
   2. How would you characterize yourself as an English student at USMAPS?
   3. What feelings do you have about the USMA English program?
   4. Were there any surprises about the USMA English program?
   5. What, if anything, would you change about the USMAPS English program?
   6. What, if anything, would you change about the USMA English program?
   7. Overall, how well do you feel that the USMAPS English program prepared you for the USMA English program?

8. Is there anything that you would like to add to our discussion at this point?

After posing each question, I opened the floor for discussion. I noticed—after asking the second question—that each student was answering the questions in the same sequence, so I asked the students to be more informal and to have more give-and-take regarding their discussion of the questions. Additionally, once I had asked the first question, each student responded to me directly instead of to the group, so I asked students to have a conversation with one another while responding to the questions instead of replying to me. From that point forward, the discussion was free flowing, engaging, and informative. The discussion lasted approximately one hour, and I thanked the group for their participation once our discussion was complete.

5. Results: As was the case with the individual interviews and the classroom observations, I learned very important lessons about using a focus group discussion as a data collection method. I enjoyed the camaraderie that the students displayed, and their answers were revealing in many ways, but ultimately I concluded that the focus group interviews did not offer any advantage to the individual interviews I had conducted. That is, the "new avenues of exploration" I mentioned previously did not open during the focus group discussion, and the participants never did seem fully at ease in this forum. Thus, I decided to use only individual interviews during the next phase of my research, and while I will wait until the Findings and Analysis chapter to discuss the results of those student interviews, I can say at this point that those interviews more than met my goals for them.

Appendix F

Interview Protocol

1. Purpose: As Irving Seidman states in his *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (9) and "At the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth" (9). Prior to conducting my data collection, I strongly felt, by virtue of my long experience as a teacher and student, that students and instructors would have much of worth to say about their perceptions regarding the USMAPS English program and its connection to the USMA English program, and the ten interviews I conducted during the course of my study certainly confirmed those feelings.
2. Selection Process: In order to gain the perspectives of the students who had studied the USMAPS English curriculum and then put that curriculum to use in EN 101, as well as the perspectives of the USMA English faculty who had taught those students in addition to their Direct Admit students, I knew that I wanted to interview both groups of subjects. To select the students whom I would interview, I reached out to a number of former students of mine whom I knew to be representative of USMAPS students with respect to ethnicity, gender, intellect, attitude, performance, interests, and geographical background. These considerations are detailed in this study's methodology chapter. With respect to selecting the USMA English faculty to be interviewed, I wanted faculty who had taught EN 101 and who represented a wide range of characteristics: ethnicity, gender, experience, military vs. civilian status, interests, and temperament. I knew six of the seven faculty I interviewed and was thus able to account for the aforementioned

characteristics when selecting them, and the seventh faculty member was someone who manifested several of the characteristics I needed to emphasize at that point in the selection process, i.e. who rounded out the interview subjects, based on the previously selected six faculty members.

3. Precautions: I provided both students and faculty with IRB-approved Informed Consent and Participants' Rights forms, the latter of which were signed by both groups. Additionally, I personally assured both groups that their responses would be confidential and anonymous. I realized that my prior personal relationship with all but one faculty member and all three students would present potential problems with respect to impartiality and candor, but I stressed to both groups the need for candor in their responses, and my prior experience with both groups and subsequent knowledge of both groups' personalities made me very confident that each group would indeed be candid. Finally, I asked the respondents if it would be acceptable for me to record the interviews so that I could later transcribe and code them, as necessary, and they all gave their permission.
4. Procedures: I interviewed each student this past spring—April 2015—in a private room I had reserved in the USMA Library. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, and at the beginning of each interview session, I greeted each student and reminded him or her of the purpose of the interview: to capture her or his perceptions of the USMAPS English program and its relationship to the USMA English program. I changed the questions from the pilot survey interviews because of the lessons I had gleaned from those sessions as well as the fact that I was interviewing students, not faculty. The questions again focused on the perceptions of the respondents about the USMAPS English program, and the specific questions are below.

1. What was your level of performance (courses, grades, and standardized test scores) in high school English?
2. How would you characterize your high school English experience?
3. How well prepared for USMAPS English did you feel just prior to beginning that experience?
4. Did that feeling change once you began USMAPS English? If so, when and why?
5. What was your level of performance in USMAPS English?
6. How would you characterize your USMAPS English experience?
7. How well prepared did you feel for USMA English (EN 101) just prior to beginning that experience?
8. Did that feeling change once you began USMA English? If so, when and why?
9. What was your level of performance in USMA English?
10. How would you characterize your USMA English experience?
11. Was it different than you expected? If so, why?
12. Did you notice any noteworthy differences, or similarities, between USMAPS graduates as a whole and Direct Admits in EN101 with respect to their preparation for and performance in college-level English?
13. Based on your experience in USMAPS English and USMA English, what, if any, recommendations do you have regarding how the former might better prepare its students for the latter?
14. Do you have anything to add at this point?

For the faculty members, and after conducting my three Pilot Study interviews, I contacted four additional instructors then teaching in the USMA Department of English—the spring of 2013—explained that I was doing interviews as part of my doctoral research, and asked if they would be willing for me to interview them about their

perceptions regarding the performance of USMAPS graduates in their English class. All four instructors responded positively to my request, so I established an interview schedule based on our mutual schedules. I conducted these interviews over a three week time-span, and all interviews took place in each instructor's office. The interviews lasted approximately seventy-five minutes on average, and I recorded all four interviews, after gaining permission from each subject to do so. The questions that I asked each interviewee are below, and these questions did not change after the Pilot Study faculty interviews because I found those questions to be exactly what I needed.

1. How long have you been teaching at West Point?
2. Do you know how many Prepsters you have had in each section (class), on average?
3. In the classroom, do you notice which students are USMAPS graduates?
4. Do you find any noteworthy differences between the performance of your Prepsters and your Direct Admits, in terms of reading, writing, or speaking?
5. Do you recall the extent to which you have to work with Prepsters as opposed to how much time you devote to Direct Admits?
6. Have you formed any general impressions of how well the USMAPS English program has prepared its students for the USMA English program?
7. Is there anything that you would like to add to this interview at this time?

5. Results: The results of both sets of interviews were extremely enlightening. I provide the details of these results in Chapter Five, Findings and Analysis, but the primary result of these interviews is that the information they elicited served as part of the foundational information of this study.

Appendix G

Observation Protocol

1. Purpose: I decided to incorporate classroom observation into my pilot study because I felt that observing how USMAPS graduates and Direct Admits behaved in class might offer meaningful insight into the manner in which the USMAPS English program had impacted Prepsters and that it might offer this insight in a way that only observation could provide. Indeed, as James Maxwell states in his *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, "While interviewing is often an efficient and valid way of understanding someone's perspective, observation can enable you to draw inferences about this perspective that you couldn't obtain by relying exclusively on interview data. This is particularly important for getting at tacit understandings … as well as aspects of the participants' perspectives that they are reluctant to directly state in interviews" (94). In accordance with Maxwell's perceptive assertions, I was hoping to use observations to gain data that I could not gain from interviews.
2. Selection Process: Although the focus of this study was on the possible connections between USMAPS English and USMA Plebe English, specifically the fall freshman composition course, I wanted to observe USMAPS graduates in all four USMA English core courses in order to literally see what, if any, progress they make in classroom demeanor as they move from their post-high school year at USMAPS to their freshman, sophomore, and junior undergraduate years. As things turned out, I was unable to schedule an observation of the primary course I was studying—EN 101—but that failure was largely mitigated by two factors: I had much other data for EN 101, and I was able to observe a section of students who had failed EN 101 in a course entitled EN 100R. Regarding the particular classrooms I observed for EN

100R, EN 102, PY 201, and EN 302, those classrooms resulted from my ability to mesh my schedule with the class(es) in question. Additionally, three of the four classrooms I observed were taught by instructors I knew in order to minimize the anxiety felt by the instructor being observed; the fourth class was taught by an instructor I had not known but who was the only available instructor whose schedule meshed with my own.

3. Precautions: In order to attempt to minimize the impact of my presence on the classroom observations I made, I undertook several precautions. Initially, I decided to be a non-participant observer so that my presence would be merely that: a presence. Additionally, I screened the roster of each class I was considering observing to ensure that I did not recognize the names of any students in that class so that I would not know which students were Prepsters and which ones were Direct Admits. Finally, I coordinated with the instructors in question ahead of time and let them know why I wanted to observe their classroom; that their identity would be kept anonymous in my study; that all of my observations would be limited to my dissertation, as opposed, for example, to being shared with their supervisor; and that they needed to make every attempt to conduct class as they normally would, despite my presence.
4. Procedures: The primary reason I decided to incorporate observations into my research was to attempt to literally see if there were any observable differences between the behavior of Prepsters and that of Direct Admits. If I saw any such differences, I would attempt to ascertain the reason for them; furthermore, if I saw no such differences, I would attempt to determine why I had not observed them. Gauging true student engagement is notoriously difficult because so many students either show engagement or hide their lack of engagement in so many ways. Fundamentally, though, study after study has shown that many, if not most, students are engaged in class when they are awake, alert, taking notes,

making eye contact with their professors and with fellow students, responding to questions, and/or asking their own questions. It is certainly possible that students not exhibiting any of these behaviors are nonetheless engaged or that students exhibiting some or even all of these behaviors are really not engaged because such behavior is merely a façade, but these cases are almost certainly the exception, not the rule. When I observed all four classes, I made contact with the instructor a few minutes prior to class; sat in the class in an empty seat; was briefly introduced so that students would not wonder who I was; took careful notes, based on the aforementioned criteria of engagement; stayed for the duration of the class; and thanked the instructor after the end of the class.

5. Results: My classroom observations were quite fruitful. Although I did not develop a chart prior to my observations and record how frequently each student demonstrated the behaviors listed in point 4, I did closely observe each class—something I was able to easily do by virtue of my non-participant observer status, a status which left me free to concentrate only on my observations—and recorded my observations in page after page of notes. The details of these observations are in my methods and findings & analysis chapters, but the most important result of my observation was that I observed no discernible difference between Prepsters and Direct Admits in each of the four classes I observed. That is, I began the observation not knowing which students in each class were Prepsters, and I concluded each observation still not knowing which students were Prepsters because there was no observable pattern of behavior among any group of students in any classroom. This result is significant because it suggests that Prepsters were not intimidated by being in class with Direct Admits who were higher achievers in many respects prior to becoming cadets, and it also suggests that Prepsters were able to make meaningful contributions to their classes and were not overwhelmed by being in a rigorous, Tier 1 classroom.

Appendix H

Survey Protocol

1. Purpose: I decided to use surveys in my research project because they enabled me to capture a large amount of important data in a very efficient manner. Indeed, I developed my surveys in a way that focused on respondents' perceptions but that made those perceptions easily analyzable in a quantitative manner. Additionally, my surveys could be closely connected to my interviews because, as Robert Yin points out in his *Case Study Research: Design and Research*, "Yet a third type of interview entails more structured questions, along the lines of a formal survey. Such a survey could be designed as part of a case study and produce quantitative data as part of the case study evidence" (91). Prior to reading this analysis of a survey, I had never thought of a survey as being a kind of interview, but in my case that is exactly what it was. Moreover, because of my research project's heavy use of quantitative data in addition to its strong reliance on qualitative data and hence its characterization as a mixed methods study, surveys that could be easily quantified but that also depended heavily upon respondents' perceptions were a perfect fit for my project.
2. Selection Process: With respect to the surveys I used, I determined that administering them to all of the USMA English faculty as well as to the entire then current Plebe class would obviously completely address any potential sampling concerns that might arise because the samples in both instances would be the entire relevant populations. In the former population, all USMA English faculty, whether literature or philosophy specialists, teach the freshman composition course, EN 101, so asking all faculty to take this survey would cover all faculty who had taught and/or were teaching EN 101. Concerning the latter population, the students, all freshmen must take EN 101—except for those who

validate this course, which is a very small number, perhaps sixty per year, and which includes at most one or two USMAPS graduates—so administering the survey to all freshmen would essentially completely cover the population in question.

3. Precautions: As part of the process of using surveys for my study, I included a written statement that all respondents read prior to taking the survey in question. This statement made it clear that the survey was completely voluntary; that there would be no reward for taking it or no penalty for not taking it; and that all responses would be kept completely anonymous so that no respondent would ever be linked to any particular response.
4. Procedures: Before administering these surveys, I spent approximately seven to eight hours developing the questions, which may seem surprising, given the brevity of those questions. However, the process of developing these questions was that time-consuming because of the time and precision required to address exactly what I wanted to address, and, of course, the underlying question of what I wanted to address evolved during the course of developing the questions. The fundamental issue addressed by both surveys was the perceptions of both populations regarding student preparation for EN 101 and what those perceptions were for the key sub-populations of instructors, Direct Admits, and USMAPS graduates. Additionally, the surveys focused on how those perceptions evolved over time, in an attempt to get at the root of the impact of preparation undergone by the two primary groups of student respondents. Moreover, developing an effective way to respond to the survey questions raised a host of possibilities, and I ultimately decided upon a numeric scale of one through ten, with one being "strongly disagree" and ten being "strongly agree."

   In terms of administering the surveys, I sought the assistance of two former colleagues in the USMA English Department, both of whom were senior

members of the Department and were quite helpful. One of these members sent the faculty survey to all faculty within the Department and included a note asking that everyone consider responding to this survey but making it clear that all responses would be anonymous and that there would be no penalty for not responding or no reward for responding. That note included a message from me that provided a brief outline of my research project and how this survey fit into that project, along with assurances that the project had IRB approval, that responding was completely voluntary, that all responses would be confidential, and that neither penalties nor rewards were associated with responding. For the student survey, the other aforementioned USMA English faculty member forwarded the survey to all instructors of EN 102, the literature course that almost all Plebes take every spring semester and that has EN 101 as a prerequisite, and asked these instructors to forward it to their students. This request from the senior instructor included the same provisos that the faculty survey did as well as the same kind of message from me, to make it clear that this effort would involve no kind of harm or ill effects on its respondents, regardless of their decision to participate or not.

Both of these surveys were administered during the spring of 2014, and the response rate for each survey was quite pleasing: fifty percent for the faculty survey and just under forty percent for the student survey. According to the office of Instructional Assessment Resources at the University of Texas at Austin, response rates of 40% for email surveys are considered "good" and 50% are "very good," so the USMA English faculty responded in a very good manner and the USMA Plebes responded in a "good" manner, but the University of Texas criteria almost certainly do not account for the hectic schedules of people like West Point cadets, especially Plebes, so a 40% response rate for this category of individuals is actually much better than "good.

The questions themselves are below, first for the faculty survey and then for the two groups of students who took the student survey.

Faculty survey:

1. I am aware of which students in my sections are USMAPS graduates.
2. Overall, my students who are USMAPS graduates have more difficulty with my class.
3. Overall, my students who are USMAPS graduates require more of my time and effort than my other students.

Direct Admit survey:

1. Thinking back to the mindset I had immediately prior to taking EN 101, I believed then that I was well prepared for EN 101.
2. After having taken EN 101 and reflecting now upon my level of preparation for EN 101, I believe that I was well prepared for EN 101.
3. EN 101 was a challenging course.

USMAPS Graduates survey:

1. Thinking back to the mindset I had immediately prior to taking USMAPS English, I believed then that I was well prepared for USMAPS English.
2. After having taken USMAPS English and reflecting now upon my level of preparation for USMAPS English, I believe that I was well prepared for USMAPS English.
3. Thinking back to the mindset that I had immediately prior to taking EN 101, I believed then that I was well prepared for EN 101.
4. After having taken EN 101 and reflecting upon my level of preparation for EN 101, I believe that I was well prepared for EN 101.
5. EN 101 was a challenging course.

5. Results: The results of these surveys played an essential role in my study. Because the surveys were focused on information necessary to my study and because so many of the relevant respondents took the survey, their answers became part of the bedrock of this study. Essentially, the responses to these surveys strongly indicated that USMA English faculty felt that USMAPS graduates were well prepared for EN 101; additionally, these responses clearly suggested that the USMAPS graduates themselves felt well prepared for USMA English, specifically EN 101. The methods and findings & analysis of this study contain many more key details of these results, but their essence is contained in the preceding sentence.

Appendix I

Quantitative Data

1. Purpose: I decided to incorporate a large amount of quantitative data into my research project in addition to my qualitative data in order to triangulate my sources as robustly as possible and thereby have the firmest possible base for my research and the findings, conclusions, and recommendations stemming from that research.
2. Selection Process: I knew early on during that decision-making process that I would almost certainly have access to all kinds of quantitative data, including high school grades, class rank, and standardized test scores and then USMA courses, grades, class rank, majors, et al. While having access to that degree of information was wonderful in many respects, it was initially almost paralyzing because the possibilities for collecting and analyzing it were almost endless. However, after much thought and consultation with a number of extraordinarily talented and helpful individuals, I was able to narrow my quantitative research lens to a number of specific queries, which collectively address the key points my research questions investigate.

   One final consideration of the selection process regarding my quantitative data is that a key part of that data collection was determining what range of years I would investigate. Because preparatory schools have been serving West Point for one hundred years as of next year, and because West Point has had a formal United States Military Academy Preparatory school since the founding of USMAPS in 1947, the number of years I could have investigated was quite large, but because of the aforementioned key decision made concerning admissions criteria for classes entering USMAPS in 1995—to admit to USMAPS only students who were disqualified from entering USMA as well as to focus on admitting students

who would help the Academy meet its class composition goals, specifically with respect to minorities and recruited athletes—I used that year as the beginning year for my quantitative data collection. In the years since that decision, roughly forty percent of students admitted to USMAPS have been recruited athletes, and normally more than half of the admitted students have been a minority of some type.

3. Precautions: When dealing with the agency that collected all of the quantitative data for my study, a process that will be outlined in the Process part of this appendix, I stressed that all of the quantitative data it collected on my behalf must be non-attributional with respect to any individual. That is, I made it perfectly clear that all of the quantitative data in my study would have to be collected and then reported in a way that would not allow me to associate any individual with any of that data, thereby making it impossible for me to make that kind of association in my study.

4. Procedures: The organization at USMA that collected all of the quantitative data for my study was the Office of Economic Manpower and Analysis (OEMA). This organization is small in number but amazing in ability and responsiveness. I began my quantitative data collection process by speaking with the Director of OEMA, who graciously offered to conduct that process. I then worked closely with two key members of OEMA via a series of meetings and email communications. The data collection took place largely during the spring and early summer of 2015 and resulted in the amassing of more than 250,000 data points based on the records of over 20,000 cadets covering a span of twenty years. The specific queries that I developed as the basis for OEMA's quantitative data collection efforts are below.

1. How many students enrolled at USMAPS, how many received offers of admission to USMA, and how many enrolled at USMA in that year's entering class?
2. What are the Direct Admit and Prepster, respectively, graduation rates from USMA?
3. What are the overall grade point averages of Direct Admits and USMAPS graduates?
4. What are the grade point averages of USMAPS English grades and the number of course failures in USMAPS English?
5. What are the grade point averages and numbers of course failures for all of the USMA core English courses—EN 101, 102, and 302 as well as PY 201—for Direct Admits and USMAPS graduates, respectively?
6. What is the correlation of SAT verbal scores and EN 101 grades for the entire Plebe class?
7. How do EN 101 course grades compare between groups of USMAPS graduates and Direct Admits who share similar entering SAT verbal scores?
8. How do the EN 101 course grades of USMAPS graduates who took EN 101 during the fall of 2010 and 2011 compare with the EN 101 course grades for USMAPS graduates who took EN 101 during the fall of 2013 and 2014?

5. Results: The data collected by OEMA is contained in a series of tables throughout this study. Those tables are consolidated below in order for the reader to be able to easily access the quantitative data of this study. The fundamental result of all of this quantitative data is that it strongly suggests that the USMAPS English program is preparing its students well for the USMA English program, but it cannot definitively establish a connection between these two programs. This result is analyzed in great detail in the final two chapters of this study.

Table I-1. Responses of the USMAPS English Faculty to the Survey Questions

Survey Questions	I am aware of which students in my EN101 sections are Prepsters	My students who are Prepsters have more difficulty with my EN101 class than do Direct Admits	My students who are Prepsters require an inordinate amount of my time
10	1	0	0
9	3	1	0
8	2	0	2
7	1	4	3
6	3	2	3
5	3	9	5
4	0	1	1
3	6	3	6
2	1	1	0
1	1	0	1
Average score	5.3	5.4	5.0

Table I-2. Survey Responses of Direct Admits

	Thinking back to the mindset I had just prior to taking EN 101, I believed then that I was well prepared for EN 101.	After having taken EN 101 and reflecting now upon my level of preparation for EN 101, I believe that I was well prepared for EN 101.	EN 101 was a challenging course.
10	58	45	8
9	36	40	18
8	75	56	49
7	55	57	51
6	27	28	41
5	20	30	42
4	6	16	23
3	6	12	29
2	4	6	21
1	4	1	9
Average	7.6	7.2	5.8

Table I-3. Survey Responses of USMAPS Graduates

	Thinking back to the mindset I had just prior to Prep School English, I felt well prepared for that course.	After having taken Prep School English, I believe that I was well prepared for that course.	Thinking back to the mindset I had just prior to EN 101, I felt well prepared for that course.	After having taken EN 101, I believe that I was well prepared for that course.	EN 101 was a challenging course.
10	10	12	13	14	2
9	5	12	8	12	2
8	21	19	24	15	10
7	14	7	17	16	17
6	9	8	9	11	11
5	9	7	5	7	13
4	5	3	1	3	7
3	3	6	1	0	8
2	1	3	0	0	5
1	2	2	1	1	4
Average:	6.9	7.0	7.6	7.6	5.5

Table I-4. Graduation Rates from the United States Military Academy for Direct Admits (DA) and USMAPS Students

	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11'	'12	'13	'14
DA	81	83	80	80	80	82	80	75	77	81	79	80	83	80	82	83
USMAPS	80	75	73	74	70	70	74	64	76	82	79	78	80	73	76	68

Table I-5. CEER Scores for Direct Admits and Prepsters

	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11'	'12	'13	'14
DA	611	617	610	609	613	608	608	613	612	614	617	613	613	611	609	621
USMAPS	577	554	551	547	531	536	532	539	545	552	536	538	532	538	521	513

Table I-6. Comparison of Admitted and Matriculated Students from 1999 to 2014

	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11'	'12	'13	'14
Offered	156	160	170	189	190	193	180	169	183	186	186	208	199	192	202	204
Matriculated	147	155	166	184	183	189	171	167	181	180	185	196	192	199	198	197

Table I-7. GPAs of Graduating Students by Year

	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11'	'12	'13	'14
DA	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.2
USMAPS	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.6

Table I-8. EN 101 GPAs by SAT Quintile for the 1999-2018 Classes

SAT Quintile	1	2	3	4	5
EN 101 GPA	2.32	2.53	2.67	2.83	2.99

Table I-9. USMAPS English Averages by Class

USMA Class	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18
	76.8	74.6	77.0	78.9	78.9	81.4	80.5	81.5	83.1	81.5	83.3	82.2

Table I-10. EN 101 GPAs for Direct Admit and USMAPS Students from 1999 to 2014

	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11'	'12	'13	'14
DA	2.41	2.42	2.56	2.47	2.54	2.61	2.56	2.62	2.60	2.79	2.80	2.86	2.79	2.74	2.93	2.72
USMAPS	2.24	2.19	2.30	2.19	2.13	2.17	2.28	2.40	2.38	2.56	2.55	2.63	2.52	2.41	2.41	2.60

Table I-11. EN 101 GPAs for "Just Above" Direct Admits and "Just Below" USMAPS Students from the 1999 to 2018 Classes

	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08
DA	2.29	2.15	2.37	2.31	2.29	2.37	2.32	2.41	2.35	2.46
Prep	2.23	2.22	2.21	2.21	.237	2.18	2.32	2.42	2.34	2.56`

	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14'	15	'16	'17	'18
DA	2.48	2.58	2.51	2.50	2.70	2.43	2.54	2.48	2.54	2.50
Prep	2.53	2.54	2.47	2.43	2.68	2.28	2.44	2.36	2.59	2.46